NATION

Faced flak from my community for backing creamy layer: CJI Gavai

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BUSINESS

FPIs withdraw Rs 11,820 cr in first week of December

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SPORTS

Neser fires Australia to 8-wicket win in 2nd Test

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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25 burn to death at Goa nightclub

Club had no NOC; Fireworks on the dancefloor allegedly led to blaze; Narrow doors trap many

PANAJI, 7 DEC

A packed North Goa nightclub turned into a death trap shortly after midnight on Sunday when a massive fire tore through the premises, killing 25 people and injuring six. The tragedy has raised serious questions about alleged illegal operations and blatant violations of safety norms.

Police initially suggested that a cylinder blast sparked the blaze, but a tourist who survived claimed fireworks were set off during a dance performance and likely triggered the fire. Most victims, including many employees, died of suffocation after they became trapped on the ground floor of Birch by Romeo Lane in Arpora, about 25 km from Panaji, a fire official said.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who ordered a magisterial inquiry, vowed strict action against officials who allowed the club to operate despite safety lapses. Police registered an FIR against owners Saurabh and Gaurav Luthra, the manager and event organisers. The Arpora–Nagoa sarpanch, Roshan Redkar, who had issued a trade licence in 2013, was detained. Sawant said four staff members been arrested. The deceased include 20 members of the staff and five tourists. Among the five tourists who died in the inferno, four were from Delhi, including three members of a single family. The fifth tourist was from Karnataka.

Lapses come to front

The nightclub reportedly had neither a fire department NOC nor a licence to serve alcohol, a Congress leader alleged. A preliminary probe found the fire began on the first floor; congestion and narrow doors prevented people from escaping. "Some rushed to the ground floor and got trapped," the chief minister said.

Eyewitnesses, including Riya from Delhi, said fireworks erupted near dancers. "There was a stampede-like situation," she recalled.

Situated along the Arpora river backwaters, the club had only narrow access routes, preventing fire engines from reaching the site. Tankers had to be parked 400m away, hampering firefighting effort **PHOTO: PTI**

Backwaters turn deadly

Situated along the Arpora river backwaters, the club had only narrow access routes, preventing fire engines from reaching the site. Tankers had to be parked 400m away, hampering firefighting efforts, officials said. Distraught relatives gathered outside the Goa Medical College mortuary, with some families from Jharkhand refusing to accept the bodies and demanding the owners transport the remains home. A group from Assam also waited for news of friends believed to be among the victims.

Opposition parties slammed the BJP government, with Rahul Gandhi calling the incident "a criminal failure of safety and governance". AAP's Goa unit said the government had lost its "moral right" to remain in power, questioning why no action had been taken earlier. The Prime Minister's Office announced Rs 2 lakh ex gratia for the deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

PHOTO: ANI

Filmmaker Vikram Bhatt arrested in Rs 30 cr IVF fraud

BENGALURU, 7 DEC

Filmmaker Vikram Bhatt was arrested on Sunday following a lookout notice issued by Rajasthan Police in an IVF fraud case involving Rs 30 crore. The arrest took place at his sister-in-law's residence in a joint operation with Mumbai Police. Authorities are seeking a transit remand from Bandra Court to transfer Bhatt to Udaipur.

The lookout notice, issued seven days before his arrest, also involved his wife, Shwetambari Bhatt, and six others accused of defrauding Dr. Ajay Murdia, founder of Indira Group of Companies. Murdia alleged that the couple lured him with promises of Rs 200 crore earnings while he sought assistance to produce a biopic about his late wife. *—Salar News*

ROLL UP IN STYLE

Bengalureans enjoy a vintage car rally raising awareness about drug abuse and peddling at Vidhana Soudha on Sunday. Home Minister G Parameshwara enjoys a ride in the first car **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

IndiGo flight ops improve on day 6

MUMBAI, 7 DEC

IndiGo continued efforts to restore normal operations on Sunday after five days of severe disruptions, operating 1,650 of its 2,300 daily flights while 650 remained cancelled. The airline now expects full network stabilisation by 10 December.

On Saturday, IndiGo's on-time performance improved to 20.7 per cent. It operated around 1,500 flights, a increase from Friday's disruption, when nearly 1,600 flights were cancelled, the worst single-day impact in its history, due to acute crew shortages following the roll-out of stricter court-mandated flight duty and rest norms. The airline said it was making progress in restoring schedules, strengthening customer support and cancelling flights earlier to improve communication. Refund and baggage processing is "in full action", with passengers advised to check flight status before heading to airports. The government said IndiGo has processed Rs 610 crore in refunds for cancelled or heavily delayed flights and delivered 3,000 pieces of separated baggage as of Saturday. *—PTI*

Passengers enquire at an IndiGo airlines counter amid flight disruptions, at Birsa Munda Airport, in Ranchi, Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

>>>More on Pages 4 & 5

PHOTO: SALAR

Venkatesh Prasad elected as new KSCA president

BENGALURU, 7 DEC

Former India pacer Venkatesh Prasad has been elected president of the Karnataka State Cricket Association, leading Team Game Changers to victory over KN Shanth Kumar's panel backed by Brijesh Patel. Santosh Menon and Sujith Somasundar, from Prasad's team, won secretary and vice-president posts respectively. The panel has pledged to actively restore mainstream cricket at Chinnaswamy Stadium, which has not hosted major matches since the stampede during RCB's title celebrations. Deputy CM DK Shivakumar, a life member of KSCA, voted in the elections, promising IPL matches will remain at Chinnaswamy and announcing plans for a new alternative stadium to prevent future incidents and safeguard Bengaluru's cricketing pride." *—PTI*

Warden smuggles drugs into B'luru Central jail

BENGALURU, 7 DEC

A warder of the Bengaluru Central Prison has been arrested for allegedly attempting to smuggle cigarettes and a narcotic substance into the jail by concealing them in his undergarments.

Rahul Patil, posted as a warder at the high-security facility, was detained on Friday at the main entrance after Karnataka State Industrial Security Force (KSISF) personnel grew suspicious during frisking when the door-frame metal detector began beeping repeatedly.

A physical check led to the recovery of two cigarette packets and a narcotic substance, officials said.

Prison Superintendent Paramesh filed a complaint with the police and suspended Patil immediately.

Rahul Patil was intercepted at around 6:50 pm on Friday after the Karnataka State Industrial Security Force personnel noticed something amiss. During the search, guards found two cigarette packets and around 60 grams of a thin, paper-like narcotic substance. The police have booked the warden under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. *—PTI*

AMID LEADERSHIP ROW

K'taka Winter Session begins today

BELAGAVI, 7 DEC

The 10-day winter session of the Karnataka Legislature, starting 8 December in Belagavi, is expected to focus on the Congress leadership tussle, farmers' grievances, and flood relief.

The unified Opposition of the BJP and JD(S) has drawn up a strategy to corner the ruling Congress on multiple issues.

BJP leaders have announced plans to move a no-confidence motion following the leadership row between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar. BJP State President on Saturday quipped that he wouldn't be surprised if the Congress party moved one against the due.

Farmers' protests have given the opposition additional ammunition to target the government.

The session will also see the tabling of 21 bills, including measures to check hate speech and hatred crimes, a law against misinformation, the Daily Wage Employees Welfare (Amendment) Bill, and the Karnataka Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill.

Other key bills include the Karnataka Scheduled Castes (Sub-Categorisation in Reservation) Bill, the Karnataka Domestic Workers (Social Security and Welfare) (Amendment) Bill, and the Karnataka Apartment Ownership (Regulation) Bill. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

Modi to open LS debate on 'Vande Mataram'

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will initiate the debate on the 150th anniversary of 'Vande Mataram' in the Lok Sabha on Monday, which is expected to bring to light several important and previously unknown facets about the national song.

Lok Sabha has listed 'Discussion on the 150th anniversary of national song 'Vande Mataram' on Monday and allocated 10 hours for the debate.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is expected to be the second speaker in the debate that will also see the participation of the Congress Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

The debate in Parliament is part of the year-long celebrations on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram, a poem written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, and set to tune by Jadunath Bhattacharya.

Modi had hit out at the Congress, accusing it of removing key stanzas from the song in 1937 and sowing the seeds of partition. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Ghaziabad teacher on SIR duty dies

GHAZIABAD, 7 DEC

A 58-year-old biology teacher deployed as a Booth Level Officer (BLO) for the Special Intensive Revision exercise died at his Nehru Nagar home in Modinagar, officials said on Saturday. Lal Mohan Singh, of Modi Science and Commerce Inter College, is believed to have suffered a brain haemorrhage on Friday night. District officials said he had been unwell, while the college principal alleged Singh had been under "heavy pressure" to complete demanding door-to-door voter verification work "at any cost", leaving him stressed. Singh had been assigned duty in the Sahibabad Assembly seat. ACP Amit Saxena said the SDM is examining administrative aspects. Uttar Pradesh has recently reported multiple deaths and suicides among BLOs involved in the ongoing electoral roll revision. *—PTI*

STILL A SUCCESS?

Cheetah cub wanders out of Kuna, run over by car on highway

GWALIOR, 7 DEC

A male cheetah cub that had wandered out of Kuno National Park (KNP) died early on Sunday after being struck by an unidentified vehicle on a highway in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior district, police said.

The incident took place on the Agra–Mumbai National Highway in the Ghatigaon area, near the Shivpuri district border, approximately 35 to 40km from Gwalior, Inspector General of Police for the Gwalior Zone, Arvind Saxena, told PTI over the phone.

The cub, around 20 months old, had strayed from KNP and become separated from its mother. It was fatally injured after being hit by an unidentified vehicle, he added.

A member of the police investigation team stated that they have obtained some leads regarding a car suspected to have collided with the cheetah.

"We have reduced traffic and imposed lower speed limits on the highway to avoid any further incidents, as another male cub separated from the same mother may still be nearby. Both had previously been sighted together," Saxena said. "The other cub is safe," forests official.

He said the deceased cub was the offspring of Gamini, a cheetah brought from South Africa as part of India's efforts to revive its cheetah population, which became extinct in the country seven decades ago.In March, Gamini and her four cub's two males and two females were released into the Khajuri forest area of KNP, officials previously said. —PTI

K'taka sets 50 quintals cap for buying maize

BENGALURU, 7 DEC

Karnataka government on Sunday revised its maize procurement order, raising the maximum quantity that can be purchased from each farmer under the support price scheme.

A corrigendum issued after the government order states that the earlier cap of 20 quintals per farmer has been increased to 50 quintals.

"Based on the extent of land held by farmers as recorded in the FRUITS software, up to 50 quintals of maize shall be purchased from a farmer at the support price of Rs 2,400 per quintal, calculated at 12 quintals per acre. Priority shall be given to procurement through Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) located near distilleries," the statement said. The procurement rate remains unchanged at Rs 2,400 per quintal. The order reiterates that purchases will be prioritised through PACS near distilleries. The revision comes after maize growers recently protested against "unfair treatment." *—PTI*

Cabinet rejects renaming Raj Bhavan: HK Patil

HUBBALI, 7 DEC

Law and Parliamentary affairs Minister HK Patil said that the State Cabinet on Thursday deemed changing the name of Raj Bhavan to Lok Bhavan not appropriate. "As long as Rajyapal (Governor) is there, it is Raj Bhavan," Patil said. He said that the State government would take up the issue with Governor Thawarchand Gehlot and decide upon its next course of action. The Raj Bhavan in the City was renamed Lok Bhavan on Wednesday following the direction of the Union Home Ministry. *—Salar News*

Three of family killed in Mandya car accident

MANDYA, 7 DEC

Three members of a family, two of them women, were killed when the car they were travelling in overturned and fell into a ditch on Sunday, police said. The driver lost control of the vehicle and crashed into a bridge on the Bengaluru-Mangaluru National Highway at Nagamangala in Mandya district, police added. Among the deceased were Chandregowda, 62; and Sarojamma, 57, both residents of Chikkamagaluru. They were returning to their hometown when the accident occurred. In another incident near Agaralinganna Doddi in Maddur taluk, a private bus overturned on a service road, injuring more than 30 people. Locals helped rescue the passengers. They were travelling to Bengaluru after visiting the Shimsha Maramma temple in Malavalli. *—PTI*

Job fair held in Mysuru for disabled people

MYSURU, 7 DEC

A dedicated job fair for persons with disabilities was held on Sunday by PADHA Trust and Devdan Foundation Learning Centre, in collaboration with the Association of People with Disability (APD), Bengaluru, at Gokulam. The initiative aimed to connect candidates with diverse abilities, including those with hearing and speech impairments, to employers across various sectors. Dhanya Uthappa, Chairperson of the Devdan Foundation, noted that over 100 candidates with different disabilities participated, ranging from SSLC and PUC to ITI, Diploma, and degree holders. Participants also received information on government schemes for aspiring entrepreneurs. APD Coordinator Santosh Chacko added, "We identify their abilities, provide training, and match them with suitable job opportunities," highlighting the 4 per cent reservation for people with disabilities in both government and larger private companies. *—Salar News*

Belagavi Winter Session set for political showdown

N Karnataka issues likely to be debated amid protests

BELAGAVI, 7 DEC

The Winter Session of the Karnataka Legislature will commence in Belagavi from Monday amid tight security and an electric political environment.

The State holds its winter session in Belagavi every year. So far, 13 joint sessions of both the Houses have been held in the city, incurring a total expenditure of nearly Rs 170 crore. Last year's session alone cost Rs 15 crore, while this time the 10-day session is expected to cost around 21 crore.

All 11 sessions held at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha—except for the first two at KLE's Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College—have witnessed pro-Maharashtrian the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti's (MES) parallel gathering that was named as 'maha melava' (a mega convention).

Due to protests from Kannada outfits, the State government barred the organisation from holding the meeting that used to take place on the inaugural day of every session. The government made the MES hold its maha melava to Shinnolli, a border village in Maharashtra, some 13kms away from Belagavi.

In one such agitation by farmers, violence broke out and then Belagavi SP Sanjay Patil sustained head injuries during stone-pelting but continued to manage the situation with a makeshift bandage. The protest led to a five-hour blockade of the Pune–Bengaluru National Highway adjacent to Suvarna Soudha.

The 2023 and 2024 sessions were dominated by the agitation of the Panchamasali Lingayat community demanding inclusion under Category 2A reservation. Despite the government offering Category 2B, the community continued its protest. In 2023, a massive rally led by Shri Jayamruthyunjaya Swamiji was held near the highway, with several ministers and legislators skipping the session to participate. In 2024, the protest turned violent, prompting a police lathicharge. This year, the Panchamasali community has again been granted permission for a silent protest on 10 December.

Although the Belagavi district administration claims to be fully prepared, there is public concern that despite the huge expenditure, issues concerning North Karnataka rarely receive the priority they deserve. Traditionally, discussions related to the region are limited to the last two days of the session, while much of the time gets consumed by disruptions and political clashes. *—Salar News*

TIGHT SECURITY AND LOGISTICS

- With 6,000 cops, security beefed up near Suvarna Vidhana Soudha
- 3,000 rooms to accommodate legislators

MAJOR PROTESTS PLANNED

84 organisations have prepared to launch protests during the session. Here are some

- BJP plans to lay siege to Suvarna Soudha demanding compensation for crops such as green gram and soybean.
- Sugarcane farmers are gearing up for a massive rally over long-pending demands.
- Youth groups will protest seeking government recruitment.
- The Panchamasali community will hold a silent protest.

POST-STAMPEDE

Chinnaswamy will continue to host IPL matches: DKS

BENGALURU, 7 DEC

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar announced that Chinnaswamy Stadium will continue to host IPL matches.

The announcement comes amid doubts over hosting the event in the State after the 4 June stampede at the stadium, which occurred when a large crowd had gathered to celebrate the Royal Challengers Bangalore's victory in IPL 2025.

Speaking to reporters after voting in the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) presidential elections on Sunday, Shivakumar said a new large stadium will also be constructed in future.

"I'm a cricket fan. We will ensure that the mishap in Karnataka does not happen again and will hold cricket events at Chinnaswamy Stadium in a manner that upholds the image of Bengaluru," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

He added that the KSCA will operate the stadium as per law, with proper crowd management measures in place.

"We will not shift the IPL and will continue to hold it at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. This stadium is a matter of honour of Bengaluru and Karnataka, which we will retain."

When asked about women's matches, he said the government will ensure opportunities for them too.

About voting in the KSCA elections, he said, "I am a member of the KSCA. When I was young, Nagaraj gave me a membership. His son is my classmate. I know Brijesh Patel, Anil Kumble and Prasanna." *—Agencies*

Kidwai performs bone marrow transplant on kid with 1 kidney

BANGALORE, 7 DEC

- The child, Yuvraj (name changed), was diagnosed with Wilms' tumor in December 2022 and underwent chemotherapy, complete removal of the left kidney (nephrectomy)

The State-run Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology (KMIO) has achieved a significant milestone by successfully performing a stem cell / bone marrow transplantation (BMT) on a 9-year-old boy with relapsed Wilms' tumor, a type of kidney cancer, who has a single functioning kidney.

The child, Yuvraj (name changed), was diagnosed with Wilms' tumor in December 2022 and underwent chemotherapy, complete removal of the left kidney (nephrectomy), followed by radiation therapy. His cancer unfortunately recurred in April 2025, and with his mother working as a domestic help and his father as a daily-wage labourer, the family faced severe financial constraints in accessing advanced treatment.

The transplant was successfully performed by Dr Vasundhara Kailasnath, Associate Professor – BMT and her team at Kidwai. They concluded that patient's best chance of survival despite the relapse was high-dose chemotherapy followed by BMT.

According to Dr Vasundhara, the case was particularly challenging because of the child's single kidney status prior multiple chemotherapy exposures, young age, the need for high-dose BMT medications, and the heightened risk of severe, potentially life-threatening infections.

During the child's discharge on Saturday evening, Medical Education Dr Sharan Prakash Patil, Minister congratulated the team. *—Salar News*

Couple dies by suicide 1 week after 1st child

SRINIVASAPUR, 7 DEC

An Assamese couple working as labourers at a poultry farm in Srinivasapur, Kolar district, allegedly died by suicide leaving behind a seven-day-old baby girl. The couple were found in their beds when other labourers peeped in the window and saw the baby crying by their bodies, police said.

The deceased, Rehaman, 28, and Fareedha, 22, migrated to the State a few years back and were working at poultry farm in Upparapalli. Fareedha gave birth to a girl child last Sunday.

Things seemed normal till Saturday evening when the couple reportedly had dinner together and later consumed poison.

Several poultry farm labourers have died by suicide recently in the area. A woman and her seven-year-old son died on 6 September in a poultry farm at in Srinivasapur taluk in a suspected self-immolation case. Similarly, on the 16 June, two labourers reportedly died after consuming water mixed with pesticide. *—Salar News*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

Official booked for sharing Babri demolition video

KALABURAGI, 7 DEC

A case has been registered at the Brahmapur police station against Ambadas Khatal, an office manager at the Kalaburagi City Municipal Corporation, after a video showing the demolition of the Babri Masjid was shared as his WhatsApp status and it went viral.

Based on a complaint filed by Municipal Corporation member Sheikh Ajmal Ahmad Gola, the Brahmapur police registered an FIR against Ambadas Khatal.

Ambadas had shared on his WhatsApp a video showing visuals of Babri Masjid's demolition on 6 December, 1992.

In the video, a song saying "Banayenge Mandir" can be heard. The video also had the words "Hindu Shaurya Day – 6 December 1992." It was also observed that his status had the caption: "As said, we have built the temple there."

After the circulation of this video, many members of the minority community said that the official had hurt their sentiments. Some municipal members lodged a complaint with the Municipal Commissioner seeking action against the officer. *—Salar News*

THE PRIDE WALK

People take part in The Pride Walk, a festive gathering and simultaneously a demonstration for equality, acceptance, and legal rights, in Bengaluru, on Sunday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Dehlvi Remedies Pvt Ltd shines at AYUSH Health Mela in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, 7 DEC

Dehlvi Remedies Pvt. Ltd., a renowned name in Unani healthcare, made a strong impression at the AYUSH Health Mela held in Hyderabad to mark the 8th UDMA Day. The event, considered a major national and international platform for traditional healing and natural health, brought together practitioners, researchers and global delegates.

The company aimed to highlight the scientific foundation of its Unani formulations and its century-long legacy. Since 1926, Dehlvi has combined classical Unani wisdom with modern research and technology, launching pioneering projects that helped modernise the sector and expand access to safe, reliable products.

Marketing Manager Muhammad Irshad said the public response surpassed expectations.

"A large number of visitors—including students, physicians, researchers, university representatives, doctors and international delegates—visited our stall. People showed deep interest in our 100-year journey, research efforts and the modern presentation of traditional Unani wisdom," he said. He added that Dehlvi remains committed to high standards.

"We have conducted extensive studies on various aspects of Unani medicine, and our products stand out for their quality and reliability. Participating in the AYUSH Health Mela allowed us to engage directly with the public and experts, which is an honor for us."

Delegations from several countries also visited the stall, expressing strong interest in the company's research, quality processes and long-standing legacy. Dehlvi said it remains focused on giving Unani medicine a renewed identity rooted in heritage yet aligned with modern scientific standards.

The participation of the Dehlvi Group reaffirmed the brand as a symbol of trust, quality and scientific excellence.

3 ELDERY WOMEN HURT

Rabid dog attacks 7 people in Chamarajanagar

MYSURU, 7 DEC

A rabid dog attacked seven including three elderly women at Yelandur town in Chamarajanagar district on Saturday.

The dog attacked them near the bus stand at Canara Bank circle in the town.

The dog initially attacked an elderly woman - Chowdamma of Yelandur town - who was returning home from the provision store, and then targeted another two elderly women - Lakshmamma of YK Mole and Rathnamma of K Devarahalli – while they were waiting for a bus.

The elderly women suffered wounds on their face, on their forehead, deep cuts in their hands and legs. All the victims were rushed to Yelandur town general hospital and their condition was stable.

Residents of the Yelandur town demanded the taluk administration to control stray dog menace.

CHALLENGE FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Chamarajanagar district reported 1,568 dog bite cases from January to June this year, compared to 3,268 cases last year, officials said.

The stray dog menace is a growing challenge for urban municipal authorities. The City Municipal Council floated a tender three times under the animal birth control programme, but no NGO came forward.

According to taluk-wise reports, Chamarajanagar taluk reported 481 dog bite cases this year until June, Gundlupet reported 234, Hanur 236, Kollegal 617, and Yelandur 18 cases. Stray dogs have also killed 43 livestock, including goats, sheep and calves, in Chamarajanagar district over the past four months.

Although the State and Union governments have issued directions to civic bodies and local and district administrations to initiate regular measures to hold mass dog vaccinations and other measures to achieve rabies-free status, the Chamarajanagar local administration failed to undertake both mass dog vaccination and sterilisation in recent years, locals alleged.

This has resulted in an increasing population of dogs as well as a stray dog menace and dog bite cases in the district. Without vaccination and sterilisation, the stray dog population and associated risk of rabies continued to grow.

Speaking to Salar, Chamarajanagar Deputy Director of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences Manjunath said that the department compensated livestock owners for sheep, goats and calves killed by dog attacks across the district. *—Salar News*

Carol singing competition spreads Xmas cheer

MYSURU, 7 DEC

The Catholic Association of Mysore ushered in the spirit of Christmas by organising the 21st Diocesan Carol Singing Competition at the St. Philomena's College Indoor Stadium at Bannimantap here on Sunday. The event began with a solemn Eucharistic Celebration by the Bishop of Mysore, the Most Rev Dr Francis Serrao SJ.

The day-long competition was formally inaugurated by Bishop Serrao, who extended his blessings and Christmas greetings to all participants.

Around 85 teams participated in five categories — schools (VIII to XII), colleges, parishes, professionals and institutional staff — singing carols in English, Kannada, and other languages.

Each team, ranging from eight to 45 members, was allotted six minutes to present their carols. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Kerala CM agrees for public debate with Venugopal

KOZHIKODE, 7 DEC

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said he is ready for a public debate on the performance of the state's UDF MPs and urged the opposition to set a date and time. The CM was responding to AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal, who questioned whether he was ready for an open debate, after Vijayan criticised UDF MPs for failing to raise Kerala's development issues in Parliament and often taking positions against the state's interests. Vijayan accused the UDF MPs of adopting a stand supporting the Centre's attempt to destroy Kerala. He also alleged that the opposition in MPs tried to get all Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) ration cards abolished in Kerala. —*PTI*

'30 translations of Thirukkural available by 2026'

VARANASI, 7 DEC

The Central Institute of Classical Tamil is translating the Thirukkural into 30 languages. The text, known for its timeless relevance, contains 1,330 couplets on virtue, material life, and love. The institute, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Education, was set up in Chennai after Tamil was declared a classical language in 2004. So far, the Thirukkural has been translated into 34 languages, including 25 Indian languages. By Pongal in January 2026, the institute plans to release translations in 30 more languages. Some selected Indian languages are non-scheduled, including the language of the Irular tribe in Ootacamund. Proposed foreign translations include German, French, and Spanish. The institute aims for 100 languages by August 2026 as part of its expansion plan. —*PTI*

Endless chances for India-Israel ties: Israeli officials

JERUSALEM, 7 DEC

Israeli officials said their ties with India are "very strong" and called the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) project a "very good" initiative with "endless" collaboration opportunities. Another official from the foreign ministry said there are "endless opportunities" for the two countries to work together. The IMEC, launched at the 2023 G20 Summit in Delhi, aims to boost connectivity, trade, and sustainability across three regions. India, Saudi Arabia, the EU, the UAE, the US, and other G20 partners have signed the agreement, while Jordan and Israel that have not yet joined. The 7 October attack "put a lid" on IMEC progress; countries hesitated due to regional war risk. —*PTI*

Over 6 kg heroin, pistol seized along Punjab border

CHANDIGARH, 7 DEC

The Border Security Force (BSF) has recovered over six kilograms of heroin and a pistol, as part of two separate search operations along the India-Pakistan border in Punjab, an official said on Sunday. One of the incidents occurred in Amritsar, the official added. BSF troops launched an extensive search operation after spotting a drone on Saturday night and found 12 packets of heroin weighing 6.638 kilograms in a field near Daoke village, he said. In a separate operation in the Ferozepur border area, BSF personnel recovered a pistol along with four rounds from agricultural land near Gandu Kilcha village, the official added. Authorities have intensified border patrolling following these recoveries to prevent smuggling and maintain security. —*PTI*

Cong MP Tewari tables bill in LS to end 'whip tyranny'

The bill is introduced for the third time in LS after 2010 & 2021

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

Congress MP Manish Tewari has introduced a bill in Lok Sabha that seeks to allow parliamentarians to take an independent line in voting on bills and motions other than those affecting the government's stability in a bid to free them from "whip-driven tyranny" and promote "good lawmaking".

Tewari, who introduced the private member's bill on Friday last to amend the Anti-Defection Law, said his proposed legislation seeks to flag who has primacy in a democracy - the elector who stands in the sun for hours to elect his or her representative or the political party whose whip the representative becomes the helot of.

Manish Tewari PHOTO: PTI

Tewari for the third time in Lok Sabha after 2010 and 2021, seeks to give parliamentarians the freedom to toe an independent line in voting on bills and motions other than a confidence motion, no-confidence motion, adjournment motion, money bills and financial matters that could affect the stability of a government.

"This bill seeks to return conscience, constituency and common sense to the echelons of the legislature so that an elected representative actually functions as the representative of the people who elected him and not as an instrument of a whip issued by his party, transforming lawmakers into mere lobotomised numbers and dogmatic ciphers responding to a division bell," Tewari told PTI.

Speaking about the bill, Tewari said it seeks to achieve twin objectives — the stability of the government is not impacted and parliamentarians and legislators exercise legislative choice.

The reason for this is that parliamentarians do not see a role for themselves in lawmaking which is one of their essential functions, he said.

Asked whether the bill aims to remove the tyranny of the whip and promote good lawmaking, Tewari said "absolutely". —*PTI*

ON 16 DECEMBER

Police reject Sengottaiyan's plea on Vijay's Erode rally

ERODE, 7 DEC

Police refused permission to hold TVK Chief **Vijay**'s public meeting in Erode on 16 December, after former minister KA Sengottaiyan, who recently joined the party, submitted an application on Sunday, department sources said.

Erode is the home turf of Sengottaiyan, a nine-time MLA and former minister, who joined the actor-politician's party after being expelled from the AIADMK. The meeting would have been an opportunity for him to prove his strength in organising a meeting of this scale.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "The TVK chief will visit Erode on 16 December and address a meeting on a

private plot of land near a marriage hall."

Sengottaiyan also submitted an application to the District Collector, S Kandasamy, seeking permission for the meeting. Later, he submitted a copy of it to the district police office. After this, A Sujatha, the Superintendent of Police, inspected the seven-acre site in the Pavalathampalayam area on Erode-Perundurai Road where TVK wanted to hold the meeting. —*PTI*

KOLKATA'S MEGA GITA RECITAL

Amid chants of Lord Krishna's name and the blowing of conch shells, lakhs of devotees and monks from across Bengal and neighbouring states gathered at Kolkata's Brigade Parade Ground on Sunday for a massive Bhagavad Gita recital. Saffron-clad monks led the reading of shlokas in unison. Senior BJP leaders, including Sukanta Majumdar and Suvendu Adhikari, attended the event, calling for Hindus to unite to prevent 'demographic change' PHOTO: PTI

Bengal ready to end religious arrogance: Guv on Babri row

KOLKATA, 7 DEC

Political tensions are escalating in West Bengal ahead of the upcoming assembly elections, following two significant religious events over the weekend.

On 6 December, suspended Trinamool Congress MLA Humayun Kabir laid the foundation for a mosque modelled on the Ayodhya's Babri Masjid in Murshidabad's Rejinagar. The timing of the ceremony coincided with the anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992, drawing concern from various political figures. West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose addressed a Gita recital at Brigade Parade Ground, stating that the state is "ready to end religious arrogance," while indirectly commenting on the events in Murshidabad.

Humayun Kabir PHOTO: ANI

Bose quoted from the Bhagavad Gita, emphasising moral integrity, "To protect the righteous, to annihilate the wicked, and to reestablish the principles of dharma I appear on this earth, age after age." He indicated a commitment to ending corruption amidst the socio-political climate.

In response to Kabir's actions, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya warned that any mosque constructed in the name of Mughal emperor Babar "will not only face opposition but will also be swiftly dismantled." He criticized the Samajwadi Party for its recent electoral losses, asserting they were on the decline.

Humayun Kabir announced plans to organise a Quran recital featuring one lakh participants in February, stating, "Thereafter, the work for the construction of Babri Masjid will commence."

The events underline the growing religious and political currents shaping West Bengal's landscape as elections approach. —*PTI*

Trump official begins 5-day visit to India

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

Allison Hooker, the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, commenced a five-day visit to India on Sunday to strengthen bilateral strategic and economic relations.

Hooker's visit to New Delhi and Bengaluru occurs amidst growing tensions following the US imposing a substantial 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods, including a 25 per cent levy on India's procurement of Russian crude oil. According to US embassy, her trip represents a pivotal move towards advancing **US President Donald Trump**'s objectives for a robust US-India partnership and ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Scheduled from 7 to 11 December, Hooker aims to deepen economic and commercial ties, emphasising increases in American exports and collaboration in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and space exploration. The embassy detailed that "while in New Delhi, Under Secretary Hooker will meet with senior Indian officials to discuss regional security, economic cooperation, and shared priorities in the Indo-Pacific, including

- Notably, her visit follows just two days after Russian President Vladimir Putin's brief summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

through foreign office consultations with Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri."

In Bengaluru, Hooker plans to visit the Indian Space Research Organisation and engage with leaders from India's vibrant space, energy, and technology sectors to promote innovation in US-India research partnerships and explore opportunities for expanded cooperation. Notably, her visit follows just two days after Russian President Vladimir Putin's brief summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. —*PTI*

Russian journalists disappointed over strict security during Putin's visit

MOSCOW, 7 DEC

Russian journalists accompanying President Vladimir Putin on his recent visit to India have voiced their disappointment over stringent security measures encountered during the 23rd India-Russia summit. Putin's two-day trip to New Delhi from 4-5 December focused on enhancing the strategic and economic partnership between the two nations.

Reporters from Kommersant and Vedomosti described security checks at venues such as Hyderabad House and Rashtrapati Bhavan as unexpectedly intensive. Andrei Kolesnikov, of the Kremlin press pool said "We were warned about power banks... But they didn't warn us about other things. For example, they confiscated my regular phone charger... then they started confiscating lipstick and cologne from the girls... Why combs? Why hair bands?"

Elena Mukhametshina from Vedomosti, who covered Putin's welcome at Rashtrapati Bhavan, echoed these sentiments. —*PTI*

Campaigning ends for first phase of Kerala local body polls

T'PURAM, 7 DEC

Campaigning for the first phase of the local body polls in Kerala — considered as a semi-final for the Assembly elections next year — will conclude on Sunday. The Election Commission has made arrangements for voting in seven districts on 9 December.

The seven southern districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki and Ernakulam- will vote on Tuesday in the first phase.

Voters in the remaining districts of Thrissur, Palakkad, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Kannur, Wayanad and Kasaragod would vote on 11 December.

As per Election Commission figures, 1,32,83,789 people would vote to decide the future of 75,632 candidates in 23,576 wards across the state.

The results in all 1,199 local bodies are scheduled to be announced on 13 December.

With just a day left for the first phase polls, all three major fronts have expressed confidence of victory.

While the ruling CPI (M)-led LDF projected the government's development and welfare initiatives, the Congress-headed UDF campaign mainly concentrated on corruption, misgovernance, and extravagance of the Left admin. —*PTI*

Jagan to submit 1 cr signatures against college privatisation

AMARAVATI, 7 DEC

YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the leader of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, is set to meet Governor S Abdul Nazeer on 17 December to present "one crore signatures opposing the privatisation of newly established government medical colleges in Andhra Pradesh."

Jagan has accused the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition government of attempting to privatise these newly established medical facilities, thereby "weakening essential public health services across Andhra Pradesh."

The signatures have been gathered from 26 districts, and a party press release stated, "One crore signatures collected opposing privatisation of medical colleges will be presented to the Governor at 4 pm on 17 December."

In preparation for the submission, signature documents are being transported to Vijayawada in specially arranged vehicles.

YSRCP leaders will accompany Jagan to Raj Bhavan for the formal handover of the signatures. —*PTI*

COLLABORATION WITH IIT HYD

Army prints 3D bunkers in Sikkim

GANGTOK, 7 DEC

The Indian Army, in collaboration with IIT Hyderabad, has operationalised on-site 3D concrete printing technology for quick construction of bunkers, sentry posts and protective structures in Sikkim, a Defence statement said.

"The indigenous robotic 3D concrete printer, equipped with a robotic arm, circular mixer, piston pump and generator, is portable and optimised for mountainous terrain," the statement said.

The 3D concrete printing provides major operational advantages, including customised designs, enhanced blast and ballistic resistance, higher compressive strength, improved quality control, efficient use of local materials and rapid construction in tactically acceptable timelines.

Meanwhile, Defence

Spread across the Union Territories of Ladakh and J&K, and seven states have been completed at a cost of Rs 5,000 crore PHOTO: X/@prodefgau

- Rajnath Singh said that India is witnessing a paradigm shift in defence mfg, from being an import-dependent nation to an emerging exporter.

Minister Rajnath Singh said on Sunday that India is witnessing a paradigm shift in defence manufacturing, from being an import-dependent nation to an emerging exporter.

"Due to our hard work in the last 10 years, our defence production, which was approximately Rs 46,000 crore in 2014, has now grown to a record Rs 1.51 lakh crore. Our defence exports, which were less than Rs 1,000 crore 10 years ago, have now reached nearly Rs 24,000 crore," Singh said after inaugurating 125 infrastructure projects of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) here.

Spread across the Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, and seven states have been completed at a cost of Rs 5,000 crore. —*PTI*

India opens new Consulate building in Shanghai

BEIJING, 7 DEC

India inaugurated its new state-of-the-art Consulate building in Shanghai on 7 December 2025, marking the first relocation in 32 years in the city's primary business hub. The new Chancery at Dawning Centre in Changning District covers 1,436.63sqm—over double the size of the previous building—and will commence full operations from 8 December.

Indian Ambassador to China, Pradeep Kumar Rawat, emphasised the significance of the opening, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between India and China. He stated, "Shanghai remains unique for its ties with India, now represented by a truly world-class international level Consulate General of India." The event was attended by over 400 guests, including members of the diplomatic corps and the Indian diaspora from surrounding cities. Consul General Pratik Mathur reiterated the Consulate's commitment to providing seamless services for Indian nationals and Chinese partners.

Mathur highlighted the significance of the new consulate's location in the Hongqiao–Gubei corridor, reiterating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" and expressing hopes that the Chancery will flourish as a hub of friendship and trade between India and Eastern China. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Cong leader alleges int'l links in Sabarimala case

T'PURAM, 7 DEC

Senior Congress leader **Ramesh Chennithala** has alleged that the missing gold plates from the Sabarimala temple may have been sold on the international black market for around Rs 500 crore. In a letter to the Special Investigation Team (SIT), he claimed credible information linking the theft to an international antique-smuggling network involving the Devaswom Board. Chennithala said his source is willing to cooperate with investigators and testify in court. He argued that those arrested so far are only minor players, while powerful individuals with global connections remain behind the scenes. He urged the SIT to probe the broader conspiracy, insisting the case is part of a larger plan to loot temple valuables.—*PTI*

Two-year-old dies after choking on toffee

BIJNOR, 7 DEC

A two-year-old boy died in Bijnor after a toffee became stuck in his windpipe, health officials said on Sunday. Shafej, from Chak Govardhan village, was rushed to the Nehatour Community Health Centre on Saturday evening, but doctors confirmed he was brought in dead as the sweet had fully blocked his airway. Dr Ashish Kumar Arya, the centre's in-charge, warned that small children should not be given items like toffees, peanuts or grapes because they can easily cause choking. The child's father, Shamshad, said Shafej often ate toffees, but this time it became lodged in his throat, and the family's attempts to remove it failed. —*PTI*

2 UP minors killed in celebratory firing during wedding

ETAH, 7 DEC

Two minors were killed after a firearm discharged during pre-wedding celebrations in a village in Uttar Pradesh, police said on Sunday. The incident occurred on Saturday night in Umai Asadnagar village, Etah district, where music and dancing were under way when sudden gunfire rang out. Twelve-year-old Suhail, son of Asuddin, died at the scene. Seventeen-year-old Shahkhad, son of Munna Khan, sustained critical injuries. Both boys were taken to a community health centre in Aliganj, where doctors declared Suhail dead. Shahkhad was referred to a higher medical facility but later succumbed to his injuries. —*PTI*

Protesters to keep Tezpur varisty shut till VC removed

TEZPUR, 7 DEC

Tezpur University will remain shut as protesters continue demanding the removal of Vice Chancellor Shambhu Nath Singh over alleged administrative irregularities. Demonstrations have persisted since mid-September, and the Tezpur University United Forum (TUUF) — comprising students, faculty and staff — said they will not withdraw until the Union Education Ministry issues a formal notification. Tensions spiked on Saturday when a ministry delegation, led by Secretary Vineet Joshi, was held on campus for over three hours before being allowed to leave after Joint Secretary Saumya Gupta provided a handwritten assurance that Singh would not administer the university during the inquiry. Academic activities have been suspended since 29 November, and end-term exams cancelled.—*PTI*

Fire erupted on dance floor, not kitchen, say survivors

They claim 100 people were on the dancefloor in the Goa club

PANAJI, 7 DEC

At least 100 people were on the dance floor of a packed nightclub in North Goa when a fire broke out shortly after midnight on Sunday, triggering panic among tourists and staff. In the rush to escape, several people ran downstairs into the kitchen, where they became trapped, an eyewitness said.

While police have attributed the blaze to a cylinder blast, some eyewitnesses claimed the fire began on the first floor, where the crowd was dancing. Most of those killed were kitchen staff, including three women, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said. "Three to four tourists" were also among the dead, he added.

"There was a sudden commotion as flames started erupting. We rushed out only to see the entire structure up in flames," said Fatima Shaikh, a tourist from Hyderabad. She said some panicked patrons fled downwards and, in the melee, ended up inside the kitchen on the ground floor. "They got trapped there along with other staff. Many others managed to escape," she said.

The club, constructed partly with temporary materials such as palm leaves, was engulfed within minutes. Located along the Arpora river backwaters, the establishment has only a narrow entry and exit. Fire tenders were unable to reach the premises and had to be parked nearly 400 metres away. A senior Fire and Emergency Services officer said the restricted access made controlling the blaze "extremely challenging", and noted that most deaths appeared to be due to suffocation.

Questions have also emerged over the legality and safety compliance of the nightclub. Arpora–Nagoa panchayat sarpanch Roshan Redkar said the club, run by Saurav Luthra, had been operating amid a dispute between partners, with complaints filed before the panchayat. "We inspected the premises and found they did not have permission for the construction," he said. A demolition notice had been issued earlier but was stayed by the Directorate of Panchayats. The property had been sublet by the original owner to Luthra, Redkar added.

Calangute MLA Michael Lobo said the panchayat will issue notices to all nightclubs on Monday, demanding valid fire safety permissions. Licences of establishments found non-compliant will be cancelled, he said.

Authorities described the incident as "unfortunate" and promised tighter enforcement of safety norms. —*PTI*

Charred remains at the nightclub where a fire broke out in North Goa on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

AVIATION MELTDOWN

Flyers faced 'mental harassment' by IndiGo: Govt officials

PUNE, 7 DEC

Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol on Sunday said that passengers have faced mental harassment and distress due to IndiGo's operational crisis, and assured that steps are being taken to ensure accountability for that is fixed.

IndiGo has cancelled around 2,000 flights and delayed others since Tuesday.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), has constituted a four-member panel to find the reasons for the crisis and recommend mitigation measures. It has also issued a show-cause notice to IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers.

Talking to reporters here, Mohol said, "Action will be taken after the four-member committee submits its report. Accountability will be fixed, and nobody will be spared."

"Certain responsibilities that IndiGo was expected to carry out were not fulfilled, and this is what led to the present situation. The DGCA has constituted an inquiry committee. It has also issued a notice to IndiGo. Limits on ticket sales have been imposed on all airlines," he said.

Mohol said that instructions have been given to ensure all passengers whose flights were cancelled are refunded.

Meanwhile, the board of Interglobe Aviation, the parent company of IndiGo, has constituted a Crisis Management Group (CMG) to monitor the situation, the airline stated in a press release on SundayA.

The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) will be running special trains to clear the rush caused by flight disruptions, its chief spokesperson said on Sunday.

NFR CPRO Kapinjal Kishore Sharma said extra coaches of various classes have been attached to trains. — *PTI*

Faced flak from my community for backing creamy layer: CJI Gavai

MUMBAI, 7 DEC

Former Chief Justice of India B R Gavai on Saturday said he faced criticism from his own community for stating in a judgement that the creamy layer principle should apply to reservations for Scheduled Castes.

Speaking at Mumbai University on "Role of Affirmative Action in Promoting Equal Opportunity," Gavai paid tribute to Dr B R Ambedkar on his death anniversary, calling him the architect of both the Constitution and affirmative action. He explained Ambedkar viewed affirmative action as providing a bicycle to those lagging behind: "Suppose someone is

at the tenth kilometre and another at zero, the latter should get a cycle to reach faster and then walk alongside. Did Ambedkar think the person should never give up the cycle? Certainly not," he said, stressing that Ambedkar aimed for real social and economic justice, not merely formal measures.

Gavai cited the Indra Sawhney case, which enunciated the creamy layer principle, and said he himself extended it to Scheduled Castes. He explained the principle excludes economically and socially advanced individuals within backward communities from reservation benefits.

He said he was widely criticised, accused of benefiting from reservation to become a Supreme Court judge while advocating exclusion of the creamy layer. Gavai clarified there is no reservation for constitutional offices like High Court or Supreme Court judges. "Can the son of a CJI or chief secretary and the son of a labourer studying in a gram panchayat school be treated the same under equality?" he asked. —*PTI*

SC to hear on Wangchuk's 'illegal' NSA arrest today

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

The Supreme Court will hear on Monday a plea by Gitanjali J Angmo, the wife of jailed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, terming his detention under the National Security Act "illegal, and an arbitrary exercise violating his fundamental rights."

A bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and NV Anjaria is likely to hear the matter.

On 24 November, the court had deferred the matter after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and Ladakh, sought time to respond to Angmo's rejoinder.

The amended plea said, "The detention order is based on stale FIRs, vague imputations, and speculative assertions,

and lacks any connection to the grounds of detention, and is thus devoid of legal or factual justification."

Angmo said the violence in Leh on 24 September cannot be attributed to Wangchuk in any manner. The plea said it is preposterous that after three decades of being recognised for contributions to education and environmental conservation across India, "Wangchuk is suddenly targeted." — *PTI*

JKPSC hold exam as per schedule amid age row

JAMMU/SRINAGAR, 7 DEC

Thousands of candidates turned up at exam centres across Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday as the Public Service Commission went ahead with its Combined Competitive Examination, ignoring calls for postponement amid widespread flight cancellations and a row over the upper age limit.

The test began at 10 am as scheduled, ending last-minute uncertainty amid tension between Lok Bhavan and the Omar Abdullah government over demands to relax the upper age limit.

The government, political parties and candidates have been demanding postponement of the exam, while the Lok Bhavan insisted that it would not delay it.

Referring to the situation as extraordinary, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah wrote to the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) chairman on Saturday, saying that the disruption in flight services has caused widespread chaos and it has been "compounded by the uncertainty" arising from Lok Bhavan's "delay" in approving age relaxation for aspirants.

However, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha refuted the claim that Lok Bhavan has caused a delay.

Sinha responded through social media that he had returned the file the same day on 2 December with a query about the possibility of holding the examination on the scheduled date if the upper age limit was relaxed, but received no follow-up from the government.

The post said the JKPSC published an advertisement for the examination on 22 August, with the exam scheduled for 7 December. — *PTI*

ARRESTED IN 2021 TOO

Cricket coach held for sodomising 2 boys in UP

VARANASI, 7 DEC

A 45-year-old cricket coach has been arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting two minor boys, police said on Sunday. The arrest followed complaints filed by the boys' families, after which a case was registered against the coach, **Muralilal**, under the POCSO Act and other relevant sections of law.

According to Bhelupur Additional Commissioner of Police Gaurav Kumar, the boys, aged 14 and 15, had been training under the accused. Police said the first assault took place in Lucknow, where the coach allegedly took one of the boys for supposed medical tests linked to Under-14 team selection.

He later reportedly assaulted the second boy repeatedly over

three days. The incident surfaced when one of the boys became unwell and was admitted to a private hospital, where he revealed the abuse during a medical examination.

Officials also confirmed that Muralilal, a divorcee, had been arrested previously in 2021 by Lanka Police for allegedly abusing children by promising to help them secure admission to a Central school. —*PTI*

Malian rebels allegedly abduct T'gana man, family seeks help

HYDERABAD, 7 DEC

A 23-year-old man from Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, Telangana, has reportedly been "abducted" by rebels in Mali, prompting his family to seek help from both central and state governments for his release.

N Praveen, a supervisor at a borewell drilling company, was kidnapped on 23 November while returning from work, according to the company. His family became aware of the incident through relatives. Praveen's brother, Naveen, revealed, "It has been two weeks since the incident. We are distressed. My parents are not able to have food because of this."

The family approached local police for assistance, and a senior police official stated, "We have informed

- N Praveen, a supervisor at a borewell drilling company, was kidnapped on 23 November while returning from work, according to the company.

the Embassy authorities and are awaiting confirmation."

Praveen's father, Jangaiah, relayed that company owners assured them of his son's release, citing similar past incidents of rebels demanding ransom. He said, "When I spoke to him, I told Praveen to come back home. He said he would stay there for another two months... We are not able to understand what is happening."

An anguished mother appealed to authorities, "It's been 14 days now. Where is he? Please save my son." In a related incident, a 26-year-old man from Andhra Pradesh is also reported missing in Mali. —*PTI*

IN CUSTODY

UP man uploads 26 child porn videos on Instagram

PILIBHIT, 7 DEC

Police have registered an FIR against a man here after 26 child pornography videos were found uploaded on his Instagram account, officials said.

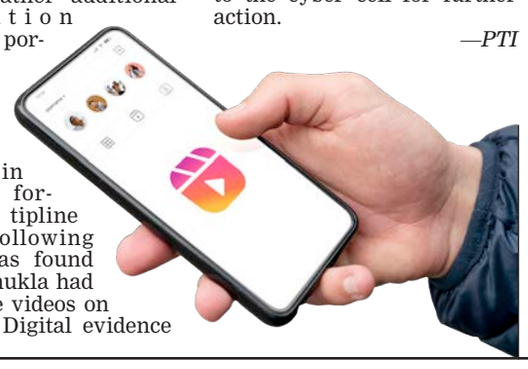
The action was taken based on a cyber tipline report received through the Union Home Ministry's cyber portal.

The mobile number linked to the Instagram account was traced to a resident of a village under the Sehramau North police station area. He was booked on Friday under provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Information Technology Act, police said.

Pilibhit Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhishek Yadav said on Saturday that a detailed probe is underway and instructions have been issued to gather additional information through the portal.

According to the FIR, the cyber crime headquarters in Lucknow forwarded the tipline report, following which it was found that Ritik Shukla had uploaded the videos on 28 August . Digital evidence has been secured, police said.

Inspector Sanjay Singh said the accused was taken into custody on Saturday but has denied uploading the content. The matter has been referred to the cyber cell for further action. —*PTI*



Manipur police arrest 10 militants for extortion

IMPHAL, 7 DEC

Security forces in Manipur have arrested 10 militants from various proscribed outfits for their alleged involvement in extortion over the past few days in Thoubal, Kakching, and Imphal West districts.

Among those detained was 51-year-old Hijam Marjit Singh, an active United National Liberation Front (Koireng) cadre, held in Imphal West for extorting truck drivers on the Imphal-Dimapur Road.

Two members of the banned KCP (Apunba) were arrested in Thoubal, with an SMG carbine and two empty magazines recovered. Other arrests included cadres of KCP (MFL), KCP (Taibanganba), PREPAK, PREPAK (PRO), and Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup. —*PTI*

TN class 12 student dies after attack by juniors

KUMBAKONAM, 7 DEC

A Class 12 student at a government school near Kumbakonam died from injuries sustained during an attack by a group of Class 11 students. The incident occurred on 4 December at the Government Arignar Anna Model Higher Secondary School in Patteeswaram, following a clash between the two classes.

According to police reports, fourteen Class 11 students allegedly assaulted their senior by striking him on the head with a wooden stick, resulting in severe injuries. The victim's parents were alerted and rushed him to the Government Hospital in Kumbakonam, before he was later transferred to a private hospital in Thanjavur where he underwent surgery to

remove a blood clot from his brain.

Unfortunately, the student succumbed to his injuries early on Sunday morning at approximately 2.30am, as confirmed by police officials. In response, all fourteen accused students have been apprehended and are currently detained in a juvenile home. The Patteeswaram Police initially registered an attempt to murder case, stating, "After post-mortem, we'll alter it into a murder case," an official confirmed. —*PTI*

IndiGo stumbled, but passengers paid the price

Stranded passengers search for luggage after IndiGo cancelled flights in Bengaluru on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

IndiGo - the airline that once redefined punctuality and scale in India - cancelled hundreds of flights nationwide, undone by its biggest operational crisis yet: a potent mix of misjudged pilot requirements under new rules and a risky "lean-staffing" or "buffer-deficit" model.

Regulatory changes to pilot duty-time limits, combined with tight staffing and an aggressive winter schedule, exposed deep cracks in IndiGo's crew-planning model this month. The airline's use-every-aircraft, maximise-night-flying strategy - the backbone of its low-cost dominance - collapsed as large segments of its pilot roster were pushed into mandatory rest periods.

India's largest airline has been for the past six days cancelling hundreds of flights, including more than 650 on Sunday out of around 2,300 daily flights it operates, throwing travel plans into disarray for tens of thousands of passengers.

The disruption left many missing critical meetings, job interviews and even their own wedding receptions, while some stranded travellers were reportedly dealing with medical emergencies.

With IndiGo commanding over 65 per cent of India's domestic market, the disruptions set off a nationwide domino effect, overwhelming airports and leaving rival carriers unable to absorb the surge of displaced travellers.

Terminals were flooded with desperate, angry passengers, while thousands of pieces of baggage lay strewn across arrival and departure halls.

Regulators have stepped in, arguably belatedly, with fare caps, advisories and oversight, while the airline has rolled out fee waivers, refunds and a phased restoration plan. The steps in the near-duopoly market - IndiGo and Tata Group-owned Air India control over 91 per cent of the market share - will take time to restore normalcy.

Here is an explainer on the crisis

TRIGGER

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) introduced revised Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) rules in phases, with full enforcement by November 1, 2025, to combat pilot fatigue and align Indian aviation with global safety standards. Under the new rules, weekly rest for pilots was raised from 36 to 48 hours; weekly number of landings a pilot can make from midnight to early morning cut to two from six earlier, maximum time pilots can fly in flights that stretch into the night capped at 10 hours, no more than two consecutive night duties and night flights defined more tightly (00.00 - 06.00 instead of earlier 00.00 - 05.00) - all of which dramatically reduced the number of flights a pilot can operate per week.

DGCA had originally notified the revised limits in January 2024. The revised rules were notified with immediate effect on 31 May last year, with airlines initially required to comply by 1 June, 2024, but their implementation was deferred to a phased roll-out starting 1 July, 2025, and completing by 1 November this year.

POOR PLANNING

IndiGo reportedly underestimated how many additional pilots were needed under the new rules. For its large Airbus A320 fleet, IndiGo said it needed over 2,422 captains to operate smoothly, but had only 2,357 and a similar shortfall among first officers.

Also, adding to the problems was IndiGo's "lean-staffing" or "buffer-deficit" strategy - limited pilot hiring, thin roster reserves and an operating model heavily reliant on night flights and high aircraft utilisation. That formula worked under the old rules, but it left the airline with virtually no cushion once stricter crew-rest requirements kicked in.

CANCELLATIONS

Mass flight cancellations were reported first on 2 December.

On 3 December, at least 150 flights were cancelled, spread across Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Mumbai. And chaos only escalated thereafter.

Major airports - Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad, among others - turned into scenes of chaos: long queues, stranded passengers, missing baggage, cancellations even after boarding or check-in, and very poor communication from airline staff.

For thousands of passengers, the disruption was far more than an inconvenience: missed weddings, business meetings and medical emergencies, alongside costly last-minute rebookings and days of uncertainty with no clear timelines.

INITIAL AIRLINE RESPONSE

IndiGo acknowledged widespread problems for the first time on 3 December, and attributed it to a multitude of factors - minor technology glitches, schedule changes linked to the winter season, adverse weather conditions, increased congestion in the aviation system and implementation of updated crew rostering rules (Flight Duty Time Limitations).

The airline said all these factors worked together to have a "negative compounding impact on our operations in a way that was not feasible to be anticipated".

IndiGo also said it would provide refunds or alternate travel arrangements.

It said the cancellations arose primarily from "misjudgment and planning gaps".

BOOKINGS

Despite problems taking root, IndiGo continued to take fresh bookings for same-day and near-future flights and checked-in passengers, later informing them that the flights were delayed and communicating cancellation after hours of wait at the airport.

Even after six days, IndiGo does not provide a clear status of flights it is operating during the day or the ones that are cancelled. It is left to passengers to find out if their flights are scheduled or cancelled, often after they reach the airport.

APOLOGY

The airline officially apologised to passengers on 4 December, following three days of long airport queues and stranded travellers left waiting for flights that never took off.

The next day, IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers issued an apology and outlined three lines of action to solve the crisis, expecting the airline to "return to a full, normal operation" between December 10 and 15.

On Sunday, IndiGo said it will operate 1,650 out of around 2,300 flights and expects to stabilise operations by 10 December.

IndiGo had also announced several measures to support the affected passengers - full refunds for all cancelled flights, processed automatically to the original mode of payment; complete waiver on cancellation and rescheduling fees for travel between 5 December and 15 December, 2025; hotel rooms and ground transport arranged across cities for stranded passengers; complimentary meals and snacks to be provided at airports; and lounge access for senior citizens, wherever possible.

RULES SUSPENDED

Facing public outrage and massive disruption, DGCA on 5 December granted a temporary one-time exemption for IndiGo's A320 fleet from certain night-duty and night-landing restrictions, effective until 10 February, 2026.

At the same time, DGCA has opened a formal inquiry. IndiGo must submit fortnightly progress reports on crew utilisation, propose a concrete roadmap to plug staffing gaps, and generally rebuild its roster resiliency.

FARE CAPS

The crisis at IndiGo led to a surge in domestic airfares across several important cities. For example, the cheapest fare for 6 December for a Delhi to Bengaluru flight crossed Rs 40,000, with some options exceeding Rs 80,000. Minimum fare for Delhi-Mumbai touched Rs 36,107, with the highest over Rs 56,000. Last-minute fare for Delhi-Chennai surged to Rs 62,00-Rs 82,000. The government stepped in on 6 December, capping fares. The Ministry of Civil Aviation ordered all airlines to maintain strict adherence to prescribed fare caps.

SHOWCAUSE

DGCA on 6 December issued show-cause notices to IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers and Accountable Manager Isidro Porqueras, seeking explanations within 24 hours on the massive flight disruptions.

The notices mentioned that the primary cause of the flight disruptions is the non-provisioning of adequate arrangements to cater to the revised requirements for smooth implementation of the approved FDTL scheme for the airline.

BOARD COMMITTEE

IndiGo on Sunday said its board of directors has set up a Crisis Management Group (CMG) comprising its chairman Vikram Singh Mehta and directors Gregg Saretsky, Mike Whitaker, and Amitabh Kant.

CEO Pieter Elbers is also part of the group that has been meeting regularly to monitor the situation and is being constantly updated by the management on the measures being undertaken. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

With Ditwah, Lanka learns a lesson in climate change

Catastrophic floods and landslides following Cyclone Ditwah have left Sri Lanka grappling with severe infrastructure collapse **PHOTO: PTI**

Cyclone-struck Sri Lanka's Kandy district, the seat of the last Royal kingdom of Ceylon, suffered extensive damage and was the worst-hit by the Ditwah disaster, which has claimed a total of 618 lives in the island nation.

Catastrophic floods and landslides following Cyclone Ditwah have left Sri Lanka grappling with severe infrastructure collapse as search operations continue for those buried under landslides a week after the disaster struck the country.

Surrounded by three mountain ranges and set in a basin-like valley, Kandy city escaped direct damage except for disruptions to its road network, electricity, and communication.

However, the devastation in the district's outer areas in the rural heartland was disastrous.

Till Saturday night, Kandy district had accounted for 232 of the 618 deaths verified so far. It leads with 91 disappearances and 1,800 fully destroyed homes.

Uprooted trees alongside badly damaged structures are a common sight, and rescue teams are still struggling to reach some of the villages cut off from road access there.

An expert indicated that "unplanned and haphazard settlements" were a cause of the disaster.

One such village is in the Minipe administrative division, 75 miles east of the city, 145 feet above sea level.

Here unfolded the tragic tale of the village of Nelummala (the lotus flower).

Around 5.30pm on 27 November, boulders came descending from a nearby range, burying all 21 houses in the village, along with the people inside.

"I managed to save six of them," Rev Palletanne Chandrananda, 34, a Buddhist monk who ran a Buddhist school in the village, told PTI on the phone.

He believes over 30 people are dead while the search is still on.

Once a beautiful, quaint village amidst acres of paddy fields, it now stands as a site of boulders and loose earth with not a trace of the happier times.

A female villager who did not want to be identified said she was thankful to the monk for her survival. "We do not know what to do now, how to restart our lives, school books, clothes and everything lost," she said.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake visited the district on Saturday and told the officials that allowing unauthorised construction of premises was as much of a problem as the nature of the disaster.

No constructions in danger areas will be allowed in future, he said.

The president also pledged a SLR 5 million grant to construct a new house for fully destroyed homes and a SLR 5 million grant for land acquisition to rebuild homes lost to the disaster.

Kalum Samarasena, a university lecturer based in Kandy, said that while unplanned, haphazard settlement was a cause, the policymakers need to think more deeply.

"What happened in places like Minipe is a warning – a warning on climate change," Samarasena told PTI.

"The government must start planning settlements from now on. Giving cash handouts is not the answer. People will naturally go back to their old places with cash. They must be resettled on state lands with necessary precautions to face disasters as these in a planned way," Samarasena said.

The cyclone wreaked havoc in the island nation and severely strained Sri Lanka's disaster-response capacity, and various nations, including India, are assisting in the rehabilitation process.

India was the first country to respond to Sri Lanka's international appeal for assistance under its Operation Sagar Bandhu. *—PTI*

Surrounded by three mountain ranges and set in a basin-like valley, Kandy city escaped direct damage except for disruptions to its road network, electricity, and communication **PHOTO: PTI**

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

The Dileep verdict: A star, an assault & a 8-yr quest for justice

- On Monday, a court in Kerala is expected to answer that question, delivering a verdict in a 2017 assault case that changed from a terrible crime into a sensational legal saga- a trial of extraordinary twists, agonising delays, and a battle over narrative.

Dileep was arrested on 10 July, 2017, after the probe team found that the prime accused Suni had allegedly sent a letter to him from jail. Dileep was granted bail in the rape case on 3 October, 2017 **PHOTO: FILE**

For nearly eight years, a key question has hung over the glittering world of Malayalam cinema: Could one of its own biggest stars, the actor Dileep, have orchestrated a horrific attack on a fellow actress?

On Monday, a court in Kerala is expected to answer that question, delivering a verdict in a 2017 assault case that changed from a terrible crime into a sensational legal saga- a trial of extraordinary twists, agonising delays, and a battle over narrative that has far outlasted years beyond its original deadline.

The actress-victim, who has worked in Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam films, was abducted and allegedly molested in her car for two hours on the night of 17 February, 2017, by some people who forced their way into the vehicle and later escaped in a busy area of Kochi.

Ernakulam District and Principal Sessions Judge Honey M Varghese will deliver the verdict after completing the trial proceedings, which began in January 2020.

As many as 10 accused who faced trial are Sunil NS alias Pulsar Suni, Martin Antony, Manikandan B, Vijesh VP, Salim H, Pradeep, Charly Thomas, actor Dileep (real name P Gopalakrishnan), Sanil Kumar alias Mesthri Sanil and Sharath.

They were charged under sections 120A (conspiracy), 120B (criminal conspiracy), 109 (abetment of offence), 366 (kidnapping or abducting a woman), 354 (assault or criminal force to a woman with an intent to outrage her modesty), 354B (use of criminal force to disrobe a woman), 357 (use of criminal force to wrongfully confine a person), 376D (gang rape), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence), 212 (harbouring an offender) and 34 (common intention) of IPC.

Section 66E of the Information Technology Act (capturing or transmitting images of private areas without consent) and 67A (transmitting sexually explicit material electronically). Dileep faces an additional charge under Section 204 of the IPC (destroying evidence to prevent its production).

Police arrested the accused soon after the incident and filed the first chargesheet against seven persons in April 2017. During further investigation, Dileep was arrested on 10 July, 2017, after the probe team found that the prime accused Suni had allegedly sent a letter to him from jail. Dileep was granted bail on 3 October, 2017.

In November 2017, police filed a supplementary chargesheet against seven more persons, including Dileep. Five of them were later discharged or turned approvers.

Although the mobile phone used to record the sexual assault visuals could not be traced, police relied on the memory card containing the videos, which was submitted in court by a lawyer.

The prosecution claims that the complainant informed Dileep's first wife, Manju Warrier, of his affairs with another actress. There was a fight between the complainant and Dileep over this during the rehearsal of a stage event in 2016.

The conspiracy was hatched in the aftermath of the fight at a hotel in Kochi later. Like the case itself, the trial too witnessed several twists and turns. In 2019, Dileep approached the Kerala High Court seeking a CBI probe, but the plea was dismissed. In 2019, the Supreme Court directed that the trial be completed in a six-month period.

However, frequent petitions before higher courts by the accused, the prosecution and the complainant delayed proceedings, and the trial finally began only in January 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic halted proceedings for several months.

Later, Special Prosecutor A Suresan resigned, and the prosecution approached higher courts seeking transfer of the trial to another court in December 2020.

On December 29, 2021, when the investigation officer was to be examined as the last witness, the prosecution informed the court that new information had emerged and sought further investigation, halting the trial again.

The further probe was based on revelations by film director B Balachandra Kumar that Dileep possessed visuals of the victim. Another allegation was that Dileep conspired to harm the investigation officers, leading to another case against him and five others.

When the trial resumed, VN Anilkumar was appointed Special Public Prosecutor. He resigned in December 2021 and was replaced by V Ajakumar. Another major twist emerged in 2022 when police moved the trial court seeking an inquiry into illegal access to the memory card kept in court custody.

Though the petition was dismissed, the Kerala High Court later ordered a fact-finding inquiry after the complainant alleged tampering. It was revealed that the memory card had been accessed by a magistrate and later by officials at the District Sessions Court.

This led the High Court to issue detailed guidelines on handling sexually explicit evidence in December 2023. A total of 261 witnesses were examined during the trial, including several from the film industry. Many actor-witnesses turned hostile. The investigation officer alone was examined for 109 days. The court admitted 834 documents and two defence witnesses.

Meanwhile, two key witnesses - former MLA PT Thomas and director Balachandra Kumar- died during the trial stage.

"We are hopeful of the judgment, as all possible evidence was presented before the court. The delay was due to various developments during the trial," an officer who was part of the investigation told. *—PTI*

18 migrants drown as boat sinks near Greece

ATHENS, 6 DEC

At least 18 migrants have died after their inflatable boat sank south of the Greek island of Crete, Greek authorities reported on Saturday. The boat, partially submerged, was discovered by a passing Turkish merchant vessel. Two survivors were rescued, with ongoing efforts to locate any additional victims. Greece remains a primary entry point into the European Union for migrants fleeing conflicts and poverty, making tragic incidents common. The perilous journey across the Mediterranean has seen a rise in crossings from Libya to Crete in recent months, despite increased patrols. Authorities are yet to ascertain the origin of the ill-fated boat. *—PTI*

2 die in an blast outside Mexico police station

MEXICO CITY, 7 DEC

An explosion outside a police station in Michoacan, Mexico, has left at least two police officers dead and seven others wounded, according to local and federal officials. The blast coincided with a federal security operation in the state, which has seen increased military presence following high-profile assassinations. Hector Zepeda, commander of the Coahuayana community police, confirmed that a number of victims were civilians and some were found far from the explosion site. Michoacan is a battleground for several drug cartels, including the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. Notably, the use of explosives by criminal groups has surged in recent months, with over 2,000 devices seized in 2025 alone. *—PTI*

'20 Sudan women gangraped while fleeing el-Fasher'

CAIRO, 7 DEC

At least 19 women, including two of whom were pregnant, were gangraped by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) while fleeing from the recently seized city of el-Fasher, the Sudan Doctors Network said. The group said it had interviewed the victims at the Al-Afad camp in Al-Dabba. "The network believes that the continuation of such crimes reflects a dangerous escalation in attacks against the most vulnerable groups," the doctors said in a statement. Notably, the actual number of women raped is likely to be much higher, and the report is only the initial stage of documentation of atrocities that occurred when the RSF seized el-Fasher. The UK Parliament was told that at least 60,000 people were killed. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Indonesian Prez to visit Pak from Monday

ISLAMABAD, 7 DEC

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto is set to embark on his inaugural official visit to Pakistan from 8 to 9 December, aimed at strengthening bilateral relations and exploring new areas of cooperation. Invited by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Subianto will be accompanied by a high-level delegation of ministers and officials. This visit marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two nations. During his time in Pakistan, Subianto plans to engage in delegation-level talks with Sharif and meet with President Asif Ali Zardari, alongside discussions with military leaders. The agenda includes trade, defence, IT, and climate issues, with several Memoranda of Understanding anticipated to be signed. The last visit from an Indonesian President occurred in 2018. *—PTI*

Japan says China directed its radar on Tokyo's jet

Beijing asks Tokyo to stop slandering as tensions escalate

TOKYO, 7 DEC

The radar lock by the Chinese aircraft was detected by different Japanese fighters on two occasions on Saturday
PHOTO: JAPAN DEFENCE MINISTRY

Japan said early Sunday that it has protested to China after a military jet that took off from the Chinese carrier Liaoning locked its radar on Japanese fighter jets near the southern island of Okinawa. Ties have plunged between the two countries recently over Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi remarks on Taiwan.

Japan's Defence Ministry said China's military aircraft J-15 "intermittently" targeted its radar at Japanese F-15 fighter jets on two occasions Saturday — for about three minutes in the late afternoon and for about 30 minutes in the evening.

The radar lock by the Chinese aircraft was detected by different Japanese fighters that had scrambled against a possible airspace violation by China, according to the ministry. There was no breach of Japanese airspace, and no injury or damage was reported from the incident.

It was not known whether the radar lock incident involved the same Chinese J-15 both times.

Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi, said Japan protested to China over the radar lock, calling it "a dangerous act that exceeded the scope necessary for safe aircraft operations."

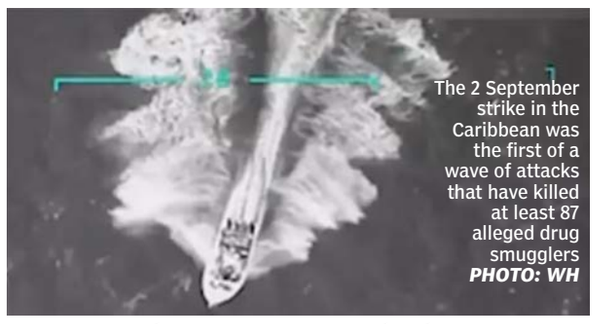
"The occurrence of such an incident is extremely regrettable," Koizumi said. "We have lodged a strong protest with the Chinese side and demanded strict preventive measures."

However, Senior Colonel Wang Xuemeng, spokesperson for the Chinese navy, defended China's flight training near the Miyako island Saturday, saying Beijing announced the exercises beforehand and accused Japanese aircraft of "harassment."

"We solemnly asked the Japanese side to immediately stop slandering and smearing, and strictly restrain its frontline actions. The Chinese Navy will take necessary measures in accordance with the law to safeguard its own security and legitimate rights and interests," Wang said.

The incident came as Japan and Australia held defence talks on Sunday.

Ties plummeted between the two neighbours after Takaichi said that any Chinese attack on Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its territory, would force Japan to get involved militarily. *—PTI*



The 2 September strike in the Caribbean was the first of a wave of attacks that have killed at least 87 alleged drug smugglers
PHOTO: WH

2 die in a blast outside Mexico police station

WASHINGTON, 7 DEC

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth defended strikes on drug cartel boats while speaking on Saturday at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. "President Donald Trump has the authority to take military action as he deems fit to defend the nation," he said.

Hegseth dismissed criticism of the strikes, which have killed around 80 people and now face intense scrutiny over concerns that they violated international law. Declaring that the strikes were needed to protect Americans, he compared it to the war on terror after the 11 September 2001 attacks.

"If you are working for a designated terrorist organisation and you bring drugs to this country in a boat, we will sink you. Let there be no doubt about it," Hegseth said during his keynote address at the Reagan National Defence Forum.

The latest strike brings the death toll to at least 87 people. Lawmakers have sought more answers about the attacks and their legal justification, and whether US forces were ordered to launch a follow-up strike after a September attack, even after the Pentagon knew of survivors.

Hegseth also discussed the need to check China's rise through strength. He repeated Trump's vow to resume nuclear testing on an equal basis with China and Russia.

He criticised Republican leaders after Ronald Reagan for democracy-building attempts. *—PTI*

Russia kills 1 in Ukraine as peace talks end in US

KYIV, 7 DEC

Russia has been targetting Ukraine's energy infrastructure
PHOTO: X@ZELENSKYYUA

- A man was killed in a drone attack on Ukraine's northern Chernihiv region Saturday night, local officials said, while a combined missile and drone attack on infrastructure in the central city of Kremenchuk caused power and water outages.

Russian missile and drone attacks overnight into Sunday killed at least one person in Ukraine, after US and Ukrainian officials wrapped up a third day of talks aimed at ending the war.

A man was killed in a drone attack on Ukraine's northern Chernihiv region Saturday night, local officials said, while a combined missile and drone attack on infrastructure in the central city of Kremenchuk caused power and water outages. Kremenchuk is home to one of Ukraine's biggest oil refineries and is an industrial hub.

Kyiv and its Western allies say Russia is trying to cripple the Ukrainian power grid, in what Kyiv calls "weaponising" the cold.

The latest round of attacks came as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday evening he had a "substantive phone call" with American officials engaged in talks with a Ukrainian delegation in Florida. He said he had been given an update over the phone by US and Ukrainian officials at the talks.

Speaking on Saturday at the Reagan National Defence Forum, US President Donald Trump's outgoing Ukraine envoy, Keith Kellogg, said efforts to end the war were in "the last 10 metres." *—PTI*

INTERIOR MINISTER SAYS NO AFTER BENIN MILITARY CLAIMS COUP

HONG KONG, 7 DEC

Benin Interior Minister, Alassane Seidou, claims an attempted military coup has been "foiled." His statement follows a broadcast on state television in which a group of soldiers, calling themselves the Military Committee for Refoundation, announced the removal of President Patrice Talon and the dissolution of all government institutions. In a Facebook video, Seidou insists that the Beninese Armed Forces have successfully thwarted the coup attempt.

Aside from the Facebook post, there has been no official update on President Patrice Talon since gunfire was reportedly heard near the presidential residence. Talon has been in power since 2016 and was due to step down next April after the presidential election. Last month, the country's legislature extended the presidential term of office from five to seven years, keeping the term limit at two.

The coup is the latest in a string of military takeovers that have rocked West Africa, with the latest being Guinea Bissau. *—PTI*

President Donald Trump presents Sylvester Stallone with his Kennedy Center Honors medal in the White House *PHOTO: PTI*

Don presents Kennedy Centre awards

President Donald Trump on Saturday presented the 2025 Kennedy Centre honourees with their medals during a ceremony in the Oval Office, hailing the slate of artists he was deeply involved in choosing as "perhaps the most accomplished and renowned class" ever assembled. This year's recipients are actor Sylvester Stallone, singers Gloria Gaynor and George Strait, the rock band Kiss and actor-singer Michael Crawford.

No US visa for fact checkers

WASHINGTON, 7 DEC

The Trump administration formalised a crackdown on issuing visas to people whom it considers to have engaged in censoring the free speech of US citizens.

The action, detailed in a state department memo sent to overseas missions this week directs officials to deny visas to applicants "responsible for censorship of protected expression in the US." The order requires enhanced vetting of applicants "to see if they have worked in areas like misinformation, disinformation, content moderation, fact-checking, and compliance and online safety," Reuters said. *—Agencies*

1 held with pepper spray in Heathrow

LONDON, 7 DEC

A man was arrested at Heathrow on Sunday after several people were reportedly pepper-sprayed, causing major travel disruptions, the Metropolitan Police said.

The situation is not being considered as "life-threatening." Instead, police believe the incident involved an argument between a group of people known to each other.

The incident caused major disruption to flights, with the airport advising passengers to allow extra time for their journeys.

Armed police rushed to the airport, and London Ambulance Service also attended the scene as the victims were taken to a hospital. One man has been arrested on suspicion of assault. He remains in custody, and enquiries continue to trace further suspects. *—PTI*

Hong Kong holds legislative election after fire

HONG KONG, 7 DEC

Voters in Hong Kong are participating in their second legislative election since a 2021 overhaul that removed the pro-democracy opposition. The election comes on the heels of a devastating apartment fire that claimed at least 159 lives, raising public scrutiny over the government's crisis management.

City leader John Lee pledged to propose support measures for fire victims, many of whom are now homeless. Polls close at 11.30pm. Election campaigning was muted following the blaze, with authorities previously ramping up efforts to increase turnout, which was approximately 30 per cent in 2021. Officials organised forums, extended voting hours, and added polling stations. They also arrested individuals for allegedly inciting others to abstain.

Before the 2021 changes, only half of the legislature was directly elected, but now only 20 of 90 seats are contested by the general electorate. *—PTI*

Hong Kong`s Chief Executive John Lee speaks at a polling station during the Legislative Council General Electon on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

'TERROR BY WHITE MEN'

Russia's 'African Corps' accused of rapes, beheadings in Mali

DAKAR, 7 DEC

Dozens of people who have fled Mali say that a new Russian military unit that replaced the Wagner mercenary group this year is carrying out abuses, including rapes and beheadings, as it teams up with Mali's military to hunt down extremists.

The refugees said the Africa Corps, which reports to Russia's Defence Ministry, is using the same tactics as Wagner. Their accounts, collected during reporters' rare access to the Mauritanian border, have not been reported by international media until now.

The Africa Corps replaced Wagner six months ago. That sparked hope for less brutality among weary civilians. But refugees described a new reign of terror by the "white men".

West Africa's vast Sahel region has become the deadliest place in the world for extremism. The military governments of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have turned from the West to Russia to help combat al-Qaida or the Islamic State fighters.

Of the 34 civilians interviewed, almost all insisted that Africa Corps fighters operate with the same brutality as Wagner.

SCORCHED EARTH POLICY

Two refugees showed videos of villages they said were burned by Africa Corps. Two others said they found bodies of loved ones with liver and kidneys missing.

Previous reporting on social media channels, likely administered by Wagner members, that shared images of men in military uniform butchering corpses of Malian civilians, hacking out organs and posing with severed limbs.

"It's a scorched-earth policy," said a Malian village chief. "The soldiers speak to no one. Anyone they see, they shoot.... There is no difference between Wagner and Africa Corps." Malian authorities have never publicly acknowledged Wagner's or Africa Corps' presence. But Russian state media in recent weeks have published reports from Mali praising Africa Corps and Russia's Foreign Ministry said the unit is active "at the request of the Malian authorities".

Russia's African Corps replaced Wagner in Mali after the group's leader was killed following a failed mutiny attempt against President Vladimir Putin *PHOTO: TASS*

WAGNER'S ABUSES IN MALI

Wagner's partnership with Mali's army intensified in 2021 amid a lucrative arrangement said to cost Mali about USD 10 million per month. After Yevgeny Prigozhin, Wagner leader died in 2023 following a failed mutiny against President Vladimir Putin, Moscow accelerated efforts to build Africa Corps as a state-controlled replacement. Analysts estimate the unit has around 2,000 fighters, including Russians, Belarusians and African recruits.

Details of the African Corps' partnership with Mali is unclear.

Experts say it's impossible to know how many people are being killed and assaulted in Mali, and who is behind it.

Civilians are trapped between pressure from both the militants and the Africa Corps and Malian fighters. As one refugee said: "If you don't tell the army you saw jihadists, the army will kill you. But if you tell them, the jihadists will find you and kill you".

DIRECT ACCOUNTABLY FOR RUSSIA

Legal experts said the shift from Wagner to Africa Corps makes the Russian government directly accountable for its military unit's actions. That means any war crimes committed by Africa Corps in Mali are attributable to the Russian government. *—PTI*

Bank of M'rashtra cuts retail loan rates by 25bps

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

Public-sector lender Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has cut interest rates by 25 basis points on repo-linked retail loans, including home, car, and education loans, following the RBI rate reduction. Revision became effective on 6 December, the bank's home loan starts from 7.10 per cent interest rate and car loan from 7.45 per cent, which is among the lowest in the banking industry, BoM said in a statement. Effective 6 December, BoM said home loan rates now start at 7.10 per cent and car loans at 7.45 per cent, among the lowest in the industry. This benefit of reduced interest rates reflects the bank's commitment to offer best financing solutions in the current high-interest rate landscape by making retail loans cheaper to bring. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Deloitte launches new AI tool for faster tax research

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

Deloitte has introduced Tax Pragya, an AI-powered digital platform designed to deliver faster access to tax research and insights for its clients. The platform will be formally launched on 9 December. Tax Pragya cuts hours of court-judgment research using Deloitte's curated internal database rather than open-source material. The AI-powered platform contains the firm's tax knowledge. Tax Pragya will be a B2B subscription-based platform, which will not replace the tax consultants, but only ease the process of tax research by making it faster, he added. In the first phase, Tax Pragya will roll out to 500 Deloitte clients, expanding to all 5,000 in January 2026. By June 2026, Deloitte plans a pan-India launch for MSMEs and SMEs. *—ANI*

UAE emerges as top destination for India's tech growth

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

As India's tech-solution providers push beyond traditional markets in a bid to diversify their global footprint, the Gulf, especially the UAE, has rapidly emerged as their newest frontier. Indian tech firms are increasingly anchoring themselves in Dubai and beyond. This momentum is now gaining fresh pace; Indian enterprises are no longer just exporting technology, they are reshaping the Gulf's digital economy. Proptech is the use of digital solutions and technology to innovate the real estate industry across its entire lifecycle, from design and construction to management and transactions. India's emerging tech firms are becoming a catalyst for redefining how cross-border real estate investment is conducted. *—ANI*

IL&FS moves NCLT to recover Rs 187 crore

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

The IL&FS Group will move the NCLT to recover Rs 187 crore in excess remuneration from former directors and two subsidiaries after they refused to return the amount, the debt-ridden firm said in a recent affidavit. Statements reveal, former subsidiary directors have refused to return excess managerial remuneration. Last year, accounts and financial statements of IL&FS subsidiaries were recast on the directions of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and a loss of around Rs 9,600 crore across five years was found. IL&FS is in the process of recovering Rs 187 crore from the directors and independent directors of the previous board, during whose tenure the company and two subsidiaries were shown in profit of Rs 1,869 crore. *—PTI*

FPIs withdraw ₹11,820 cr in first week of December

The total outflow for 2025 has reached Rs 1.55 lakh crore

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

Foreign investors have pulled out Rs 11,820 crore (USD 1.3 billion) from Indian equities in the first week of this month, primarily driven by the sharp depreciation of the rupee.

This sharp withdrawal follows a net outflow of Rs 3,765 crore in November, further pressuring markets.

These outflows come after a brief pause in October, when FPIs invested Rs 14,610 crore, breaking a three-month streak of massive withdrawals -- Rs 23,885 crore in September, Rs 34,990 crore in August, and Rs 17,700 crore in July.

According to NSDL data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) withdrew a net amount of Rs 11,820 crore from Indian equities in the first week of this month. This takes the total outflow for 2025 to Rs 1.55 lakh crore (USD 17.7 billion).

Analysts attribute the renewed selling primarily to currency concerns.

The rupee has depreciated nearly 5 per cent this year, prompting FPIs to pull out during such periods, said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments.

The sharp withdrawal follows a net outflow of Rs 3,765 crore in November, further pressuring markets *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

Adding to this, year-end portfolio repositioning by global investors, a typical December trend before the holiday season, has also intensified selling, noted Vaqarjaved Khan, Senior Fundamental Analyst at Angel One. Khan said delays in finalising the India-US trade deal have further dampened global sentiment.

However, despite the FPI exodus, the impact on markets has been cushioned by strong domestic participation. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 19,783 crore during the same period, completely offsetting the foreign selloff, Vijayakumar said.

DII confidence has been supported by India's robust GDP numbers and expectations of an improvement in corporate earnings ahead.

The sentiment received an additional boost after the RBI's 25-bps rate cut on 5 December, when FPI flows turned positive for the day at Rs 642 crore.

This shift was significant, considering FPIs had sold nearly Rs 13,000 crore by 4 December. *—PTI*

US Fed decision, FII activity to influence markets: Analyst

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

The US Federal Reserve's interest rate decision will significantly influence trends in the domestic equity market this week, with foreign investor activity also impacting sentiment, analysts have stated. Stock markets finished the previous week on a muted note, with the benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closing flat.

Investors are also keenly observing the rupee's movements, which recently breached 90 to a dollar. Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst at Swastika Investmart Ltd, remarked,

With the US dollar index and Treasury bond yields acting as critical indicators, Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, noted, "The Fed's messaging will be pivotal in shaping near-term sentiment and market direction for India." *—PTI*

TCS & INFOSYS TOP GAINERS

Top 5 firms' mcap rises Rs 72,285 cr

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

The combined market capitalisation of five of India's top ten most valued firms surged by Rs 72,284.74 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys standing out as the biggest beneficiaries.

Among the gainers were Bharti Airtel, TCS, ICICI Bank, Infosys, and Bajaj Finance. In contrast, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro, and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) experienced declines in their market valuations.

Last week, the BSE benchmark gained a modest 5.7 points, while the NSE Nifty witnessed a decline of 16.5 points. TCS saw its market capitalisation rise by Rs 35,909.52 crore, bringing its total valuation to Rs 11,71,862.37 crore. Infosys followed closely, with a jump of Rs 23,404.55 crore, resulting in a market value of Rs 6,71,366.53 crore. Bajaj Finance's market capitalisation increased by Rs 6,720.28 crore to Rs 6,52,396.39 crore, while Bharti Airtel saw an uptick of Rs 3,791.90 crore, reaching Rs 12,01,832.74 crore. ICICI Bank benefited from a rise of Rs 2,458.49 crore to Rs 9,95,184.46 crore.

- In contrast, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro, and LIC experienced declines in their market valuations.

On the flip side, Reliance Industries suffered a decline of Rs 35,116.76 crore, reducing its valuation to Rs 20,85,218.71 crore. LIC's market cap fell by Rs 15,559.49 crore to Rs 5,50,021.80 crore, while State Bank of India and HDFC Bank recorded declines of Rs 7,522.96 crore and Rs 5,724.03 crore, respectively.

Currently, Reliance Industries remains the most valued firm in India, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, TCS, and others. *—PTI*

India's forex reserves fall by $1.88B to $686.23B

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

India's foreign exchange reserves decreased by USD 1.877 billion to USD 686.227 billion for the week ending 28 November, according to the latest weekly data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). This follows a larger drop of USD 4.472 billion in the previous reporting week, driven by declines in both foreign currency assets and gold reserves. Over recent weeks, the forex reserves have generally been on a downward trajectory.

The RBI's 'Weekly Statistical Supplement' revealed that India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the largest component of the country's foreign exchange reserves, stood at USD 557.031 billion, down USD 3.569 billion. Conversely, gold reserves saw an increase of USD 1.613 billion, rising to USD 105.795 billion during the reporting week. The surge in gold prices has been attributed to heightened global uncertainties and robust investment demand.

In addition, the data indicated that Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) increased by USD 63 million to USD 18.628 billion, while the nation's reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) rose by USD 16 million to USD 4.772 billion.

India's forex reserves gained approximately USD 58 billion in 2023, contrasting with a cumulative decline of USD 71 billion in 2022. The reserves rose by just over USD 20 billion in 2024, and so far in 2025, they have cumulatively increased by around USD 48 billion. The RBI frequently intervenes in the market to manage liquidity and stabilise the rupee's value against the dollar. *—ANI*

Steadview Capital, others invest Rs 186 cr in Wakefit

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

Wakefit Innovations Ltd has garnered Rs 186 crore from three investors—Steadview Capital, WhiteOak Capital, and Temasek-backed Capital 2B—through secondary market transactions, just before its initial public offering (IPO). The three firms collectively acquired 9,557,000 equity shares at Rs 195 each from existing shareholders, including Peak XV Partners, Redwood Trust, and Verlinvest SA.

In the deal, Steadview Capital invested Rs 101 crore, WhiteOak contributed Rs 72 crore, and Capital 2B added Rs 13 crore. Following this transaction, Wakefit successfully raised Rs 580 crore from anchor investors on 5 December, including HDFC Life Insurance and Bajaj Life Insurance.

The public issue comprises a fresh issue worth up to Rs 377.18 crore and an offer-for-sale of approximately Rs 912 crore, totalling Rs 1,289 crore. The promoters, Ankit Garg and Chaitanya Ramalingegowda, along with several other selling shareholders, will reduce their holding from 43.70 per cent to around 37 per cent.

Proceeds from the fresh issue will fund the establishment of 117 new stores, equipment purchases, and marketing expenses, among other corporate purposes. Wakefit aims to boost brand visibility while continuing to expand its footprint in the home and furnishings sector.

Established in 2016, Wakefit is among India's fastest-growing players in the industry, reporting Rs 724 crore in revenue and Rs 35.5 crore in profit for the six months ending 30 September 2025. The company's shares are set to debut on the stock market on 15 December. *—PTI*

Winter demand boosts coking coal, total imports drop by 3.9% to 20.9MT

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

Coal imports in October displayed a mixed trend, with overall shipments dipping while coking coal volumes increased. The decline in total coal imports was mainly attributed to ample domestic supply, reducing the need for overseas purchases.

Coking coal imports, however, rose by 12 per cent to 5.04 million tonnes (MT), up from 4.50 MT a year earlier. This increase was driven by winter restocking by steel mills, which rely on coking coal as a key raw material for steel production. Industry experts noted that steel manufacturers typically bolster inventories ahead of winter, when transport and logistics can be disrupted, prompting higher purchases despite wider import moderation.

Overall coal imports fell 3.9 per cent to 20.97 MT compared with 21.84 MT in October last year, according to mjunction services Ltd. *—PTI*

Ceat aims to expand global tyre presence

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

Tyre manufacturer Ceat is developing products for international markets as part of its plan to expand exports to regions such as Europe and the US, and establish itself as a global brand, RPG Group Vice Chairman Anant Goenka said. Currently, exports contribute around 20 per cent of the company's revenue, with expectations of growth over the coming years.

Goenka highlighted that Ceat is designing tyres tailored to the specific needs of different regions. "What do customers require in Italy or Spain? We are developing an entire range of tyres for each market," he said. Testing is being conducted in Germany and the Nordic region to ensure suitability for local road conditions and weather.

Ceat sells about 60 per cent of its tyres in the replacement market, 20 per cent internationally, and 20–25 per cent to OEMs.

Goenka described the outlook as positive, citing stable raw material prices, with rubber at around Rs 185 per kg and crude at USD 60 per barrel.

The company is also consolidating its Camso acquisition from Michelin for USD 225 million, aiming to optimise capacity utilisation while maintaining the brand's premium positioning. *—PTI*

UIDAI's new rule mandates registration of entities seeking Aadhaar-based verification

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

A new rule to discourage entities like hotels, event organisers, etc, from taking photocopy of Aadhaar cards of customers and storing them in physical form will be published soon, a senior government official said.

Such practices are in contravention of the present Aadhaar Act.

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) CEO Bhuvnesh Kumar told PTI that the authority has approved a new rule mandating registration of entities that seek Aadhaar-based verification like hotels, event organisers, etc, to provide them access to a new technology that will enable them to verify an individual by scanning QR code or connecting with new Aadhaar app in the works, the top official said.

"The new rule has been approved by the authority and will be notified soon. It will mandate registration of offline verification-seeking entities like hotels, event organisers. The objective is to discourage paper-based Aadhaar verification," Kumar said.

The new verification process will also resolve issues related to several works that get hampered due to downtime of intermediate servers that connect with the central Aadhaar database.

Entities seeking offline verification will get access to application programming interface through which they can update their system for Aadhaar verification.

UIDAI is beta-testing a new app that will enable app-to-app verification without needing to connect with central Aadhaar database server for every verification. *—PTI*

Gold prices may stay positive: Analysts

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

Gold prices are likely to remain firm in the coming week, driven by investor focus on the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy outcome, combined with weakness in the rupee, according to analysts.

The precious metal's bias remains positive amid expectations of an interest rate cut and sustained central bank purchases, they added.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures appreciated by Rs 958, or 0.74 per cent, this week, outperforming the global prices.

In the international markets, Comex gold futures slipped by USD 11.9, or 0.28 per cent, during the week.

Mer noted that gold prices consolidated within a range during the week but stayed supported by a weaker dollar and rising bets for an interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve at its 10 December meeting. Meanwhile, silver continues to outshine gold, scaling fresh record highs on industrial demand.

Silver futures skyrocketed by Rs 8,427, or 4.81 per cent, during the week. On Friday, silver surged by Rs 7,096, or 3.98 per cent, to hit a record of Rs 1,85,234 per kg. *—PTI*

SAYS GIM & WHO STUDY

'Digital insurance system can transform India's healthcare'

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

Digitally unified insurance systems can enhance transparency, reduce fragmentation and improve access under India's evolving subsidised health insurance setup, according to a new study by the Goa Institute of Management (GIM), WHO and Gates Foundation.

The one-of-its-kind comprehensive analysis conducted in collaboration with Kerala Health department has demonstrated how integrated digital health-financing platforms can reform health systems and advance India's progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

As India continues to expand subsidised health insurance schemes, the study highlights why unification of data and processes across different stakeholders is essential for improving service delivery.

The study titled "Health System Reform Powered by Data Integration of Health Financing: Lessons from India", has been published in the prestigious journal Health Systems and Reform.

"The study provides one-of-its-kind comprehensive analysis of how digitally unified insurance systems can enhance transparency, reduce fragmentation, and improve access under India's evolving subsidised health insurance setup. In addition to this, it also builds a roadmap for other countries which are in the process of modernising their health financing system," Arif Raza, Associate Professor, Goa Institute of Management, told PTI.

- The study titled "Health System Reform Powered by Data Integration of Health Financing: Lessons from India", has been published in the prestigious journal Health Systems and Reform.

India's shift towards unified Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) offers a unique real-world laboratory for understanding the power of digital integration.

During the study, the research team found that prior to PMJAY, the standalone programmes each with different Information and Communication Technology (ICT) platforms, operational processes, and administrative structures had limited efficiency that resulted in weakened fraud detection, slowed system-wide reforms and hindered portability of benefits.

The researchers found that integrated digital systems allow beneficiaries to access services across state boundaries and facility networks, eliminating the geographical restrictions of earlier schemes. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Dallas Stars owner Tom Hicks dies aged 79

LONDON, 7 DEC

Texas businessman and philanthropist Tom Hicks, who simultaneously owned NHL, Major League Baseball, and English Premier League football clubs, died on Saturday night. He was 79. Hicks formerly owned the Dallas Stars from 1995 to 2011 and the Texas Rangers from 1998 to 2010. He also acquired 50 per cent ownership of Liverpool. A news release from Hicks Holdings LLC early Sunday morning said he died peacefully, surrounded by his family in Dallas. The 2022 inductee into the Texas Business Hall of Fame co-founded Hicks & Haas in 1984 and "was widely regarded as a pioneer in American business, reshaping private equity and introducing strategies that influenced an entire generation of investors," according to a release.—*PTI*

Kenyans Korir and Jepkosgei win pacey marathons

DUBAI, 7 DEC

Kenyans John Korir and Joyciline Jepkosgei both set personal bests as they won the men's and women's Valencia marathons on Sunday. On a course renowned for fast times, Korir, who won in Boston in April but failed to finish in Chicago in October, came home in 2 hours 02 minutes 24 seconds the eighth-fastest all-time men's marathon. Jepkosgei set a women's course record as she won in 2:14:00, the fourth-best women's time in history. Korir launched a blistering attack at the 25-kilometre mark (15.5 miles) to burn off his rivals. He finished almost two minutes ahead of Germany runner-up Amanal Petros (2:04:03). Norway's Awet Kibrab (2:04:25) was third.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Kirsten appointed consultant for Namibia men's team

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

World Cup-winning former India head coach Gary Kirsten has been appointed consultant for Namibia's men's national teams and will work alongside head coach Craig Williams in the build-up to next year's T20 World Cup. The global showpiece is scheduled to be held in India and Sri Lanka in February-March 2026. "It is indeed a privilege to work with Cricket Namibia. I have been thoroughly impressed with the dedication and determination to create a high-performance cricket environment," Kirsten said in a Cricket Namibia statement.—*PTI*

Manipur win Junior Girls' National Football C'ships

ANANTAPUR, 7 DEC

Manipur on Sunday clinched the Junior Girls' National Football Championships Tier 1 title for the whopping 12th time with a thumping 9-0 victory over Bengal here. Chingkhamayum Redima Devi (8th, 41st, 65th), Longjam Nira Chanu (29th, 55th, 59th) slammed a hat-trick each, while Yaiphabi Thokchom (68th, 76th) struck a brace and Mongjam Pusparani Devi (75th) scored once. Manipur were the dominant side throughout the championships, named after legendary Indian footballer Dr Talimeren Ao. Bengal, chasing a fairy-tale finish, were simply outplayed in the final by the tiny but formidable northeastern state.—*PTI*

Neser fires Australia to 8-wicket win in 2nd Test

England needs a win to have any chance of reclaiming Ashes

BRISBANE, 7 DEC

Australia stormed to an eight-wicket victory in the second Ashes Test on Sunday to take a 2-0 series lead as England succumbed on day four to a pace blitz from unlikely hero Michael Neser. Helped by the catching magic of home captain Steve Smith, 35-year-old Neser finished with five for 42 in his first Test in three years, leaving the hosts with a 65-run target to win the day-night match at the Gabba on Sunday.

He hit the winning runs in the second cricket test to give Australia a 2-0 Ashes lead.Set a target of 65 for victory after England was bowled out for 241 in the second innings, Australia raced to an eight-wicket win in 10 overs, either side of a 20-minute interval as serious storms brewed to the southwest.

Jofra Archer was bowling around 150 kph (93 mph) under the lights, and it only fired up Smith. The third test starts on 17 Dec. at the Adelaide Oval with England needing a win to have any chance of reclaiming the Ashes. The fourth test starts on Boxing Day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, and Sydney will host the fifth test from 4 January.

The Australian team celebrate with Michael Neser PHOTO: PTI

He then ramped him for a boundary and hit the next ball for a six to bring up 1,000 test runs at the Gabba.

England not standing up under pressure: Ben Stokes

England's Ben Stokes lamented his team's failure to stand up in pressure moments after defeat by Australia in the second Test at the Gabba on Sunday, but the captain refused to concede that the battle for the urn is over.

England trails 2-0 in the five-Test series after being outplayed with bat, ball and in the field during the eight-wicket loss in the day-night match in Brisbane."We weren't able to execute with bat and ball and will be having some conversations in the dressing room," Stokes said."In small passages, we have been able to bring the game back into some kind of control and then let it slip away.

I think a lot of it, to me, comes down to not being able to stand up to the pressure of this format. It seems to be a constant that when the pressure is on, Australia keep outdoing us."

Australia 511 (Starc 77, Weatherald 72, Labuschagne 65, Carse 4-152) and 69 for 2 beat England 334 (Root 138*, Crawley 76, Starc 6-75) and 241 (Stokes 50, Neser 5-42) by eight wickets —*PTI*

GIVE THEM SPACE

You have to treat Rohit and Kohli differently: Bangar

VISAKHAPATNAM, 7 DEC

Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma deserve to be treated differently for their body of work over the years, and their place in the ODI side should have never been a topic of debate, reckons ex-India batting coach Sanjay Bangar.

The national selection committee members and head coach Gautam might be skeptical about the senior duo retaining form and fitness till the 2027 World Cup, but the two batting stalwarts have three hundreds (two by Kohli) and five half-centuries (three by Rohit) between them in the last six ODIs. "I don't think the place of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the team should have been a question. Look at what they have done over so many years," Bangar said while speaking to JioStar.

Sanjay Bangar PHOTO: PTI

Since ODI is the least played format, Bangar knows that often it might take a couple of games to get into the groove, but they have earned that time with their achievements for the national team.

"They have retired from two formats, so they might take just a couple of sessions to get back into action, because they have done it so often. They don't need to play as many matches as a younger player. "Once they are there, once they are hungry and fit, you want players of that quality. You have to treat them differently and give them space," Bangar said, clear about why there needs to be a different yardstick for the two white-ball legends. —*PTI*

ISSF WORLD CUP FINAL

Simranpreet Kaur Brar PHOTO: PTI

Simranpreet wins 25m pistol gold, Aishwary clinches 3P silver

DOHA, 7 DEC

Young Simranpreet Kaur Brar overcame a challenging field to win the women's 25m pistol gold, while men's 50m rifle 3-position exponent Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar bagged a silver on ISSF World Cup Final debut here on Sunday, completing a full set of medals at all possible world and continental championships in the sport.

Simranpreet, whose father left his government job to support his daughter, did her parents proud with the biggest achievement of her career by shooting a superb 41 in the final, equalling the World junior record in the process. The other Indian to qualify for the eight-shooter final, Esha Singh, finished seventh. Double Olympic bronze medallist Manu Bhaker could not make the final after finishing ninth in the qualification round with a score of 581.

In the qualification round, 21-year-old Simranpreet, who had won a silver at the World Cup in Lima earlier this year, shot 585, while Esha tallied 585 to finish fifth and fourth, respectively and make the final.Simranpreet began slowly, missing three targets in the first series of five shots to slip to eighth and last position.But she rallied thereafter and fired three perfect 5s in the competition to jump to the China's ace shooter and reigning 10m air pistol world champion Yao Qianxun, who finished a distant second with 36 points, and former world champion Doreen Vennekamp of Germany, who took the bronze.

In men's 50m rifle 3-positions, Aishwary finished 0.9 points behind Czechia's Jiri Privratsky, who shot 414.2 in the final played in the new ISSF format of 40 shots. Olympic champion Liu Yukun won bronze.Aishwary, who is a double Olympian, former junior world champion, and reigning Asian champion, has also won a silver in the World Championship last month. Aishwary shot 595 in qualification to finish second behind China's Tian Jiaming, who blazed the Lusail shooting ranges with a world record 598.Athlete of the Year Jon-Hermann Hegg of Norway and Hungarian ace Istvan Peni were the other top guns in the top eight, which again saw three Chinese go through. Aishwary was fourth with a score of 102.8 after the 10 shots in the first kneeling position, shot over two series of five shots each. The next 10 shots of the second prone position are where Aishwary found his momentum and climbed up to second. —*PTI*

Neergard-Petersen claims first major title at Aus Open

MELBOURNE, 7 DEC

Rasmus Neergard-Petersen won the Australian Open for his first major professional title Sunday when his scrambled par on the final hole crushed the hopes of hometown favourite Cam Smith, who was chasing his first win in more than two years.

Smith and Neergard-Peterson came to the 72nd hole tied at 15-under after a thrilling contest over the last nine holes. Petersen shanked his drive into difficult rough on the right with a bunker between his ball and the green. Smith found the green with his second, but with a long, sloping putt to the hole. —*PTI*

Salah says Liverpool 'threw him under the bus'

LEEDS, 7 DEC

Mohamed Salah cast doubt on his Liverpool future, saying he felt like he's been "thrown under the bus" by the Premier League champion.

Salah spoke out after being dropped for the third game in succession and was an unused substitute as Liverpool drew at Leeds 3-3. "I'm very, very disappointed to be fair. I have done so much for this club down the years and especially last season," the Egypt international told the media. —*PTI*

Guwahati Masters: Saraswat clinches maiden super 100 title

GUWAHATI, 7 DEC

India's' Sanskar Saraswat clinched his maiden Super 100 title after eking out a three-game victory over compatriot Mithun Manjunath in the men's singles final of the Guwahati Masters here on Sunday. The 19-year-old from Jodhpur showcased grit and firepower while unleashing a barrage of smashes to outwit former national champion Manjunath 21-11, 17-21, 21-13 in an all-Indian final that lasted 50 minutes.

Tanvi finishes runner-up

However, Tanvi Sharma, a world junior championships silver medallist, registered a runner-up finish in women's singles after losing 18-21, 18-21 to Tung Ciou-Tong of Chinese Taipei in the finals.

Tanvi and Tung engaged in some lively rallies, with the Indian mixing her strokes well to take an 11-8 lead at the mid-game interval. However, the Taiwanese shuttler gradually clawed her way back, drawing level at 16-16 before edging ahead 18-16.

Tanvi then struck two wayward smashes, allowing Tung to pocket the opening game.

After the change of ends, the players were locked at 5-5 and 6-6 before Tanvi once again led 11-8 at the interval, helped by a spate of unforced errors from her opponent. But Tanvi faltered soon after, committing a series of mistakes, including four shots into the net, as Tung levelled the game at 13-13.

The 16-year-old from Punjab had reached the semifinals at the Syed Modi International Super 300 last week. She had reached the Odisha Masters final last year and finished runner-up at this year's US Open Super 300. —*PTI*

FIH Jr World Cup final: Spain beat Argentina 2-1

CHENNAI, 7 DEC

Spain edged out two-time champions Argentina 2-1 in a hard-fought match to enter their maiden FIH Junior World Cup final here on Sunday.

Dominating the game early on, Spain secured the first penalty corner of the match in the seventh minute, and Mario Mena scored from a rebound to take the lead.A minute later, Argentina too got their first penalty corner, but they could not capitalise on the opportunity.

Spain continued their attacking game and earned a short corner in the 17th minute, which was brilliantly saved by Argentina goalkeeper Joaquin S Ruiz.

Argentina finally drew level through a perfectly executed penalty conversion by Juan Fernandez in the 21st minute.

The Argentines had another chance in the first half in the form of a penalty corner in the 28th minute, but the stopper failed to control the ball.Argentina secured their fourth penalty in the 43rd minute, but they wasted the chance. Seven minutes later, another short corner came Argentina's way, but that also failed to produce any result. —*PTI*

Smriti Mandhana confirms 'wedding has been called off', seeks privacy

NEW DELHI, 7 DEC

India batter Smriti Mandhana on Sunday announced that her wedding had been called off and urged fans and media to stop the speculation, while music composer Palash Muchhal confirmed that he had "decided to move on" from the relationship.

Muchhal also warned of legal action against those spreading defamatory rumours. Mandhana, one of India's most prominent women cricketers, issued her first public statement on social media after rumours about her personal life had intensified over the past month. "I need to clarify that the wedding is called off. I would like to close this matter here and implore all of you to do the same," she wrote. She was supposed to marry Muchhal on November 23, but the wedding was postponed after Mandhana's father, Shriniwas, had to be hospitalised due to a heart ailment. "Over the past few weeks, there has been plenty of speculation around my life, and I feel it is important for me to speak out at this time," she said in an Instagram post. Calling herself a "very private person", Mandhana said the need to set the record straight compelled her to speak. —*PTI*

LANDO NORRIS WINS F1 DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

DUBAI, 7 DEC

McLaren driver Lando Norris clinched his first Formula 1 title at the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Sunday.

Red Bull driver and defending champion Max Verstappen won the race with Norris placing third behind his McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri in second, which allowed Norris to finish two points ahead of Verstappen in the season-long standings.

Piastri was also in contention for his first F1 title and finished third in the standings, 13 points behind Norris.

The 26-year-old Norris became the first British champion since Lewis Hamilton in 2020, and he also denied Verstappen a fifth straight title. Norris entered the three-way battle 12 points ahead of Verstappen and 16 points ahead of Piastri.Verstappen started from pole position for Red Bull with Norris on the front row beside him and Piastri third on the grid. Verstappen needed Norris to be fourth or lower, and Norris had to finish outside the top five if Piastri won. —*PTI*

MLS CUP TITLE

Messi bests Muller, leads Inter Miami

FORT LAUDERDALE, 7 DEC

Thomas Müller has often enjoyed the upper hand in his longtime rivalry with Lionel Messi.

The German star has come out on top in seven of 10 head-to-head matchups between the two, and his teams have twice eliminated Messi and Argentina in the World Cup.

But on Saturday, in the latest marquee showdown between the two stars, it was Messi's turn.The Argentine superstar capped his third Major League Soccer season with the 47th trophy of his career, guiding Inter Miami to a 3-1 win over Müller's Vancouver Whitecaps in the MLS Cup final."Three years ago, I decided to come to MLS, and today we are MLS champions," Messi said in a quote distributed by MLS. "We reached the semifinals of the (CONCACAF) Champions Cup.

David Beckham poses with the MLS Cup trophy with Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi, in Florida PHOTO: X/@MLS

Last year, we went out early in the league and were eliminated in the first round. This year, winning MLS was one of our main objectives."Messi set up the go-ahead goal with a feed to Rodrigo De Paul in the 72nd minute then added another assist in stoppage time to deliver Inter Miami its first championship in franchise history."The team made a huge effort it was a very long year, with many matches and we were up to the task all season," Messi said. —*PTI*